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原稿用紙を買ってくれるような人達だったので、
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父ちゃん母ちゃんのおかげだと言えるのです。
今更ながら、ありがとう。

勝木　光

Baby Steps

Baby Steps ベイビーステップ

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

6

勝木光

STC
SOUTHERN TENNIS CLUB

KCM408

Baby Steps ベイビーステップ 6

勝木光

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KC 勝木光 作品

ベイビーステップ 1～以下続刊

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

プロを目指す……。ここからがスタート!!

Cover Design／Veia

2009.1

ケータイで「週刊少年マガジン」のマンガを読もう!!

全作品試し読みOK

講談社 KC+ コミックプラス

http://kcmp.jp

コミックプラス 検索

2008テレビブロス コミックアワード スポーツ漫画部門

第1位!!

人気御礼!! 初版限定! 特製ポストカード付き!!

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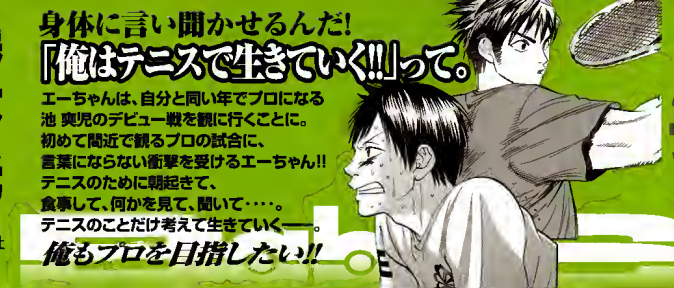
身体に言い聞かせるんだ!

「俺はテニスで生きていく!!」って。

エーちゃんは、自分と同い年でプロになる池 爽児のデビュー戦を観に行くことに。
初めて間近で観るプロの試合に、
言葉にならない衝撃を受けるエーちゃん!!
テニスのために朝起きて、
食事して、何かを見て、聞いて……。
テニスのことだけ考えて生きていく―。

俺もプロを目指したい!!



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SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

ベイビーステップ

6

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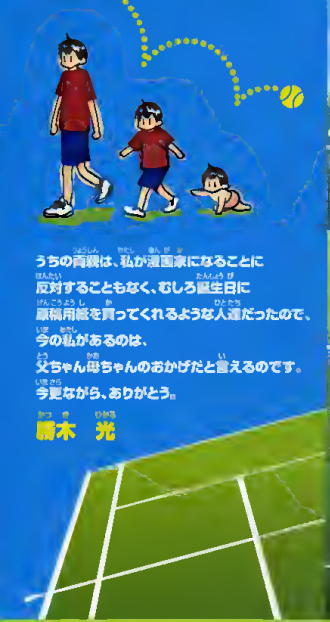

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食事して、何かを見て、聞いて……。
テニスのことだけ考えて生きていく——。
俺もプロを目指したい!!

週刊少年マガジン 50周年

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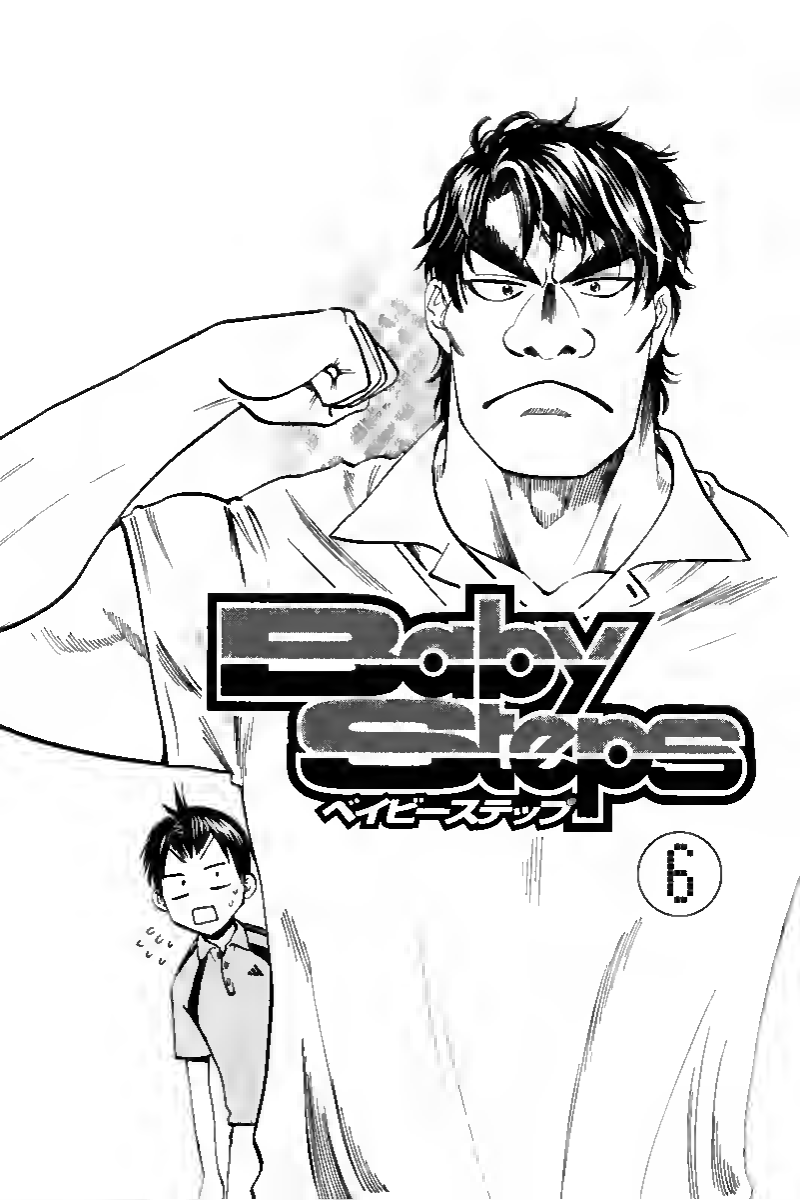

Baby Steps
ベイビーステップ
6

神奈川六天王

江川

STC所属。恵まれた身体能力と技術で神奈川の頂点に君臨。プレースタイルはサーブ&ボレー。又句を言いながらも、エーちゃんのガッツは認めている。今大会、大林を下し決勝進出決定!!

決勝進出

第1シード

荒谷

GITC所属。スプリンターばりの脚力と強靭な上半身を持つ、恐るべきベースライナー。

第2シード

大林良

梅田TC所属ながら、湘南工業学院テニス部副主将。プレースタイルはサーブ&ボレー。

第4シード

宮川卓也

宮川T.A.所属。武器は180cmの長身から繰り出されるフォアバック回転打ちのストローク。

第5シード

左城水

ファーサイドTA所属。あらゆるショットを器用にこなすオールラウンダー。

第3シード

小林浩吉

STC所属。エーちゃんを"アニキ"と慕い、集めた情報を惜しげなく伝授。STCではタクマに続く全勝選手。

第6シード

ただいま準決勝!

荒谷 VS. エーちゃん

何もやらずに負けてたまるか!!

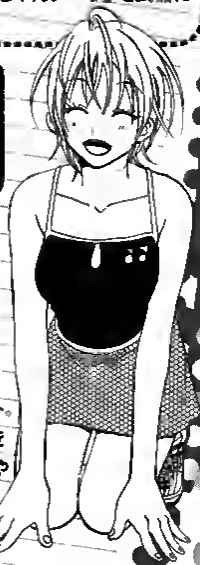
Baby Steps 人物紹介

「ベイビーステップ」

エーちゃん 丸尾栄一郎

STC所属。几帳面でマジメな優等生。気楽な気持ちで始めたテニスに、どっぷりハマる。地道な練習をコツコツ続け、着々とレベルアップ中!! 練習や試合内容をすべて書き込んだ「エーちゃんノート」を武器に奮戦中!!

ナツ 鷹崎奈津



STC所属。エーちゃんと同じ高校に通い、学年一かわいいと評判。性格はテキトーで大雑把だが、テニスに向ける情熱は人一倍!! マジメに頑張るエーちゃんを心から応援している。

影山

エーちゃんのクラスメイト。几帳面すぎるエーちゃんをからかいながらも、テニスの練習や試合に付き合うイイ奴。

佐々木姫子

エーちゃんのクラスメイト。エーちゃんに片想い??試合にも駆けつけ応援中!!

神奈川ジュニアテニスサーキット開催中!!

第2シードの荒谷相手にエーちゃん健闘中! しかし…

崖っぷち!!

Baby Steps

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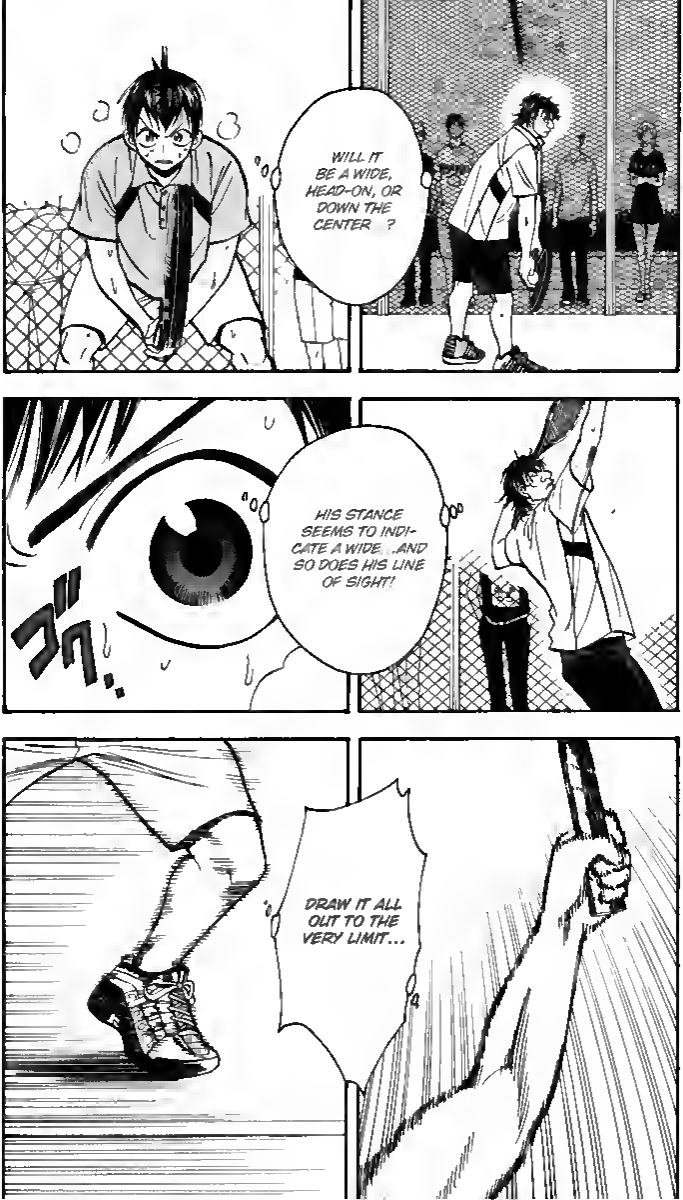
【掲載／2006年発行　週刊少年マガジン第43号・第51号　2008年第1号】
※この物語はフィクションであり、実在の人物・団体・出来事などとは一切関係ありません

to Giant Strides

WHA!?
...IN OTHER WORDS I CAN'T MAKE A MOVE UNTIL RIGHT BEFORE HE HITS THE BALL...
SO HE CAN ACCURATELY CHANGE THE COURSE OF HIS SHOT JUST WITH HIS WRIST RIGHT BEFORE HE CONNECTS WITH THE BALL!
THEN HE SHOULD HAVE FIGURED OUT THAT I AIMED DOWN THE CENTER JUST USING MY WRIST.
I KNEW IT... HE'S BEEN OBSERVING MY FORM AND READING MY SERVES...

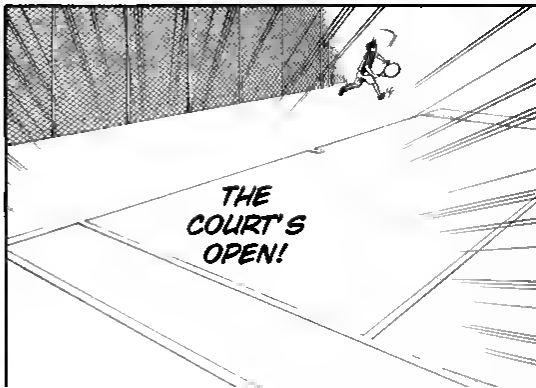
#44: INFLUENCE


WILL IT BE A WIDE, HEAD-ON, OR DOWN THE CENTER ?
HIS STANCE SEEMS TO INDICATE A WIDE...AND SO DOES HIS LINE OF SIGHT!
ゴク..
DRAW IT ALL OUT TO THE VERY LIMIT...

GOT IT!
DOWN THE CENTER!
ギク
NOT GOOD!
HE READ MY RETURN, TOO!

HAH!
KUH!

G-GET BACK OVER!
OH NO


THE COURT'S OPEN!

I MADE IT IN TIME!
HE WENT FOR THE OTHER SIDE...!

40-30!
ARAYA'S TENNIS KEEPS CHANGING...
HE MOVED AWAY BIT-BY-BIT FROM HIS S...ME-OLD-SAME-OLD METHODS OF RELYING ON HIS POWER AND SPEED AND AIMING FOR THE OPEN COURT. HE'S ACTUALLY USING STRATEGY NOW...
WE... WE'VE FINALLY REACHED THE MATCH POINT!
ARAYA! GET THIS POINT!
MARUO, YOU'RE STILL IN THE GAME! DON'T GIVE UP!
THAT GUY'S SERVE IS OUT OF THIS WORLD
BUT IF HE'S GOING TO TAKE IT, THIS IS HIS CHANCE RIGHT?
IT ALL STARTS WITH THIS SHOT.

EI-CHAN WILL NEVER GIVE UP, NOT HERE.
GET THROUGH THIS!

THERE!
IT...IT'S A WIDE!
EVEN IF MY SHOT IS READ, I'LL JUST DASH OVER TO GET THE NEXT SHOT!
AS FAR AS COUNTERS GO, I CAN READ THROUGH THEM, TOO!

HAH!
ALL RIGHT!
!?
BALL
HE'S CHASING AFTER IT?!

HUH!

THIS IS IT!
HE GOT IT! MAN, THAT SPEED'S UNREAL!
BUT THE BALL KINDA BOBBED UP A BIT!

40 ALL.
ドッ
I MANAGED TO HANG ON!
YEAH!
I SUPPOSE HIS DASH IS TURNING INTO HIS WEAPON WHEN FACING SPEED AND POWER ...
Original DRUMMER

IF I DON'T TAKE CARE OF THIS NOW, THE REST IS GOING TO BE A REAL PAIN...
I CAN STILL DO THIS I DEFINITELY CAN!

ADVANTAGE, ARAYA!
DAMN IT!
SO FAST!
EVEN IF HE COULD READ IT, THERE'S NO WAY HE'D GET IT...
AIMING FOR JUST ONE SHOT... IT'S NOT EVEN A MATTER OF WHAT TO DO NOW
I'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO HIM... ARAYA MADE HIS SHOT WITHOUT ANY FEAR OF THE LOW PROBABILITY OF ACTUALLY GETTING IT RIGHT...
ANOTHER MATCH POINT?! NO, I HATE THIS!
I TOLD YOU, HE'S FINE! THAT SHOT WON'T HIT IT'S MARK EVERY TIME!

IF THIS SECOND SERVE MISSES, IT WILL BE THE PERFECT CHANCE FOR HIM TO DASH FOR HIS RETURN SHOT... AND IN THE CASE THAT IT DOES MAKE IT, IF I CONSIDER MARUO'S ABILITY TO VARY THE BALL'S SPEED...
THIS IS THE BIG ONE...I CAN'T LET THERE BE A "NEXT" SHOT.
I NEED TO REALLY THINK ABOUT HOW I'M GOING TO SERVE THIS ONE...BUT I WONDER IF JUST DOING "THAT" WILL BE OKAY ...?
OKAY...
...
I'VE ONLY EVER THOUGHT OF KEEPING MY OPPONENT DOWN WITH MY POWER AND SPEED.
THIS IS A FIRST. ME THINKING THIS MUCH IN A GAME...
FINE THEN...
I'LL END EVERYTHING WITH THIS LAST ONE...

I'M GETTING A REALLY BAD FEELING FROM THAT STANCE ...
F-FOR SOME REASON ...
HUH ...?!

!!
A-A SLICE?!
WHAT THE HELL?! IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S SLOWLY CURVING AROUND!
AH...
THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE SOMETHING ARAYA'D PUT OUT...BUT THAT WAS REALLY AWESOME!

FIG-
URES
...!
EI-CHAN
READ IT,
TOO!
KUH!
HAH!

KUH!
HAH!
SF.
EI-CHAN, FINISH IT!

GUH!
HAH!
IT'S DEEP, BUT...
KUH...
I'LL FIGHT OUT THE MATCH RIGHT HERE!

NO...HIS STANCE IS FALLING APART...
HE'S GOING TO HIT IT WITHOUT MOVING BACK! WILL IT BE A CROSS? A REVERSE CROSS?

I WAS SO DESPERATE I GAVE HIM A GREAT LOB TO WORK WITH!
HE'S NOT AIMING FOR A REVERSE CROSS!

EI-CHAN, DO IT NOW!

GUH!
UGH...
HE SENT IT INTO A GOOD DIRECTION, BUT THE BALL WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH!
HE SAW ME MAKING MY SERVE EARLIER
DAMN THIS GUY
HE SENT IT IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION USING JUST HIS WRIST!
ARAYA WILL PROBABLY...
AAAA

A COUNTER WITH A STRAIGHT!
I'LL GET THIS ACROSS!
HAH!
OKAY I'VE GOT THIS!

!?
GET IN!

WAS IT IN OR OUT?!

GAME SET. MATCH WON BY ARAYA.
GAME... SET...
ハア
ハア
ハア

OH YEEEAH!!
I LOOOST!
ARAYA! WIN THE CHAMPI-ONSHIP THIS YEAR!
I WAS REALLY MOVED!
AWESOME JOB, NON-SEEDER!
THAT WAS REALLY CLOSE! YOU PLAYED WELL, MARUO!
WELL PLAYED!

ぎゅ
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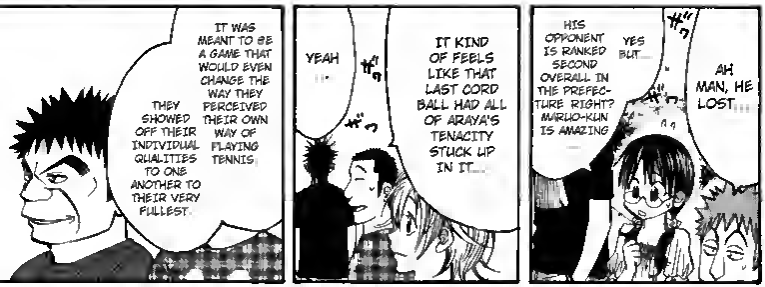
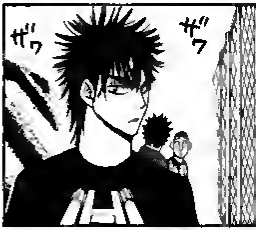
HUH ?!
THANKS.
…

THANK YOU, GOOD GAME!

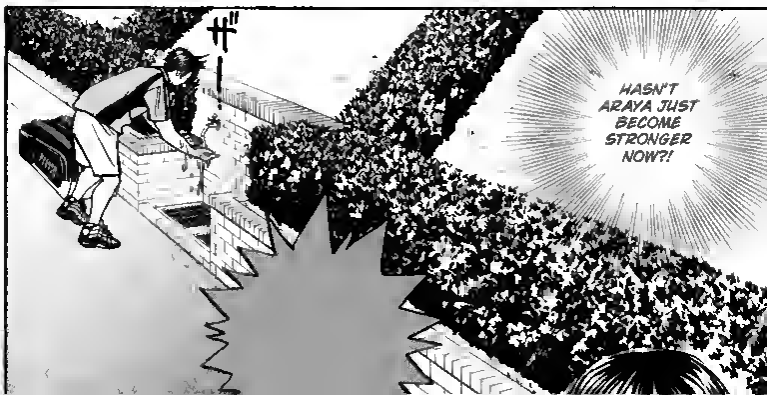

AH MAN, HE LOST...
YES BUT...
HIS OPPONENT IS RANKED SECOND OVERALL IN THE PREFECTURE RIGHT? MARUO-KUN IS AMAZING
YEAH...
IT KIND OF FEELS LIKE THAT LAST CORD BALL HAD ALL OF ARAYA'S TENACITY STUCK UP IN IT...
IT WAS MEANT TO BE A GAME THAT WOULD EVEN CHANGE THE WAY THEY PERCEIVED THEIR OWN WAY OF PLAYING TENNIS.
THEY SHOWED OFF THEIR INDIVIDUAL QUALITIES TO ONE ANOTHER TO THEIR VERY FULLEST.

WHAT IS MOST SURPRISING, THOUGH, IS THAT MARUO-KUN, IN JUST ONE YEAR, WAS ABLE TO MATCH AGAINST AN ATHLETE WHO WANTS TO GO PRO.
THAT, IN AND OF ITSELF, IS UNBELIEVABLE.



I EVEN TOLD HIM ALL OF ARAYA'S WEAK POINTS...
NOT TO MENTION THAT KID MARUO...

HE DIDN'T COME SQUAWKING AT ME TODAY
That alone gives me the creeps.
I'LL BEAT YOU DOWN JUST LIKE I DID WITH HIM TODAY!


HASN'T ARAYA JUST BECOME STRONGER NOW?!

WHAT'S WRONG? YOU'RE NOT GOING OVER THERE?
B-BUT...
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO TALK TO HIM OR NOT...
YOU CAN'T JUST SAY, "YOU DID A GOOD JOB OUT THERE"?
B-BUT...IF I SPEAK TO HIM THAT FLIP-PANTLY...
THIS IS SOMETHING YOU DO IN TIMES WHEN THEY'RE AT THEIR WEAKEST. ARE YOU GOING TO JUST THROW AWAY THIS CHANCE?
I-I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU OVER AND OVER AGAIN. I DON'T HAVE ANY SUCH INCLINATIONS!
IF YOU KEEP CARRYING ON AND ON, SOMEONE ELSE IS GOING TO...
GOOD GAME, EI-CHAN!

BUT I LOST...
AH... THANK YOU.
THAT WAS A REALLY AWESOME MATCH!
NAH... I WAS NEVER ABLE TO BREAK AGAIN IN THE SECOND SET... IT SUCKS, BUT.. I TOTALLY LOST
HAD YOU MADE IT TO THE THIRD SET I'M SURE THE TIDE WOULD'VE TURNED YOUR WAY.
TRUE. BUT YOU WERE RECOVERING BIT BY BIT IN THE LAST HALF AND YOU GUYS WERE PRETTY MUCH ON PAR WITH ONE ANOTHER AT THE END.
I DON'T THINK I LOST IN MY DRIVE TO WIN AGAINST ARAYA, SOMEONE AIMING TO BE A PRO,
AND SO... I'D REALLY WANTED TO WIN..
I DID EVERYTHING I COULD.

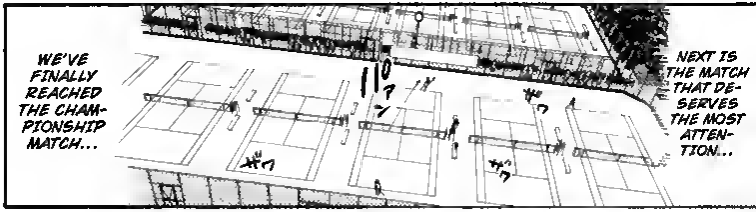
I THOUGHT ABOUT THEM OVER AND OVER ...
AND AIMED FOR HIS WEAK POINTS ...
AND DID WHAT I COULD UNTIL THE VERY END ...
BUT I LOST...
I DIDN'T LOSE IN PASSION,
I COULDN'T REACH THAT BALL EITHER ...
BUT MY ABILITY JUST WASN'T ENOUGH...
SO I...
DON'T HAVE ANY EXCUSES

う…!
ゴゴゴゴゴ
H-HE'S CRYING?!
HEY!
ナデ
E-EI-CHAN... YOU STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW AMAZING YOU ARE
ナデ
ナデ
HUUUUUH?!
HUH?!
HUH?
にっ

TO BE THAT FRUSTRATED OVER LOSING AGAINST ARAYA, SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO BE A PRO,
IS REALLY AMAZING!
.....
M-MARUO-KUN, GOOD GAME!
ビクッ!!

IT TURNED INTO THE VERY MATCH I SAID IT WOULD.
IN AIMING FOR ARAYA'S WEAKNESSES, THEY BOTH ENDED UP MATURING

NO NO DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!
UH THANKS SASAKI-SAN.
I totally freaked me out


WE'VE FINALLY REACHED THE CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH...
NEXT IS THE MATCH THAT DESERVES THE MOST ATTENTION...

SEED 1
EGAWA TAKUMA
VS.
SEED 2
ARAYA HIROSHI.

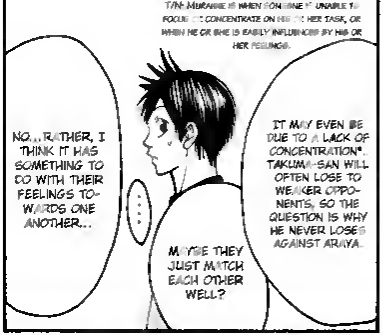
ワー
ひゃん

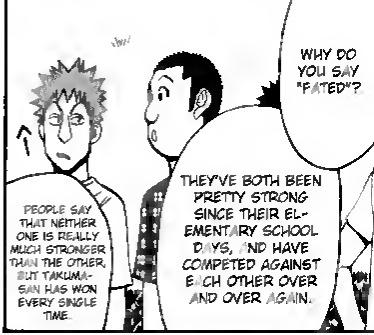
Baby Steps

THE KANGAWA JR. TENNIS CIRCUIT U-18 MEN'S SINGLES FINALS WILL BEGIN SHORTLY.
THE COMPETITORS NO.1 EGAWA TAKUMA-KUN AND NO.128 ARAYA HIROSHI-KUN ARE PLAYING ON COURT 1.

#46: THE STRONGEST

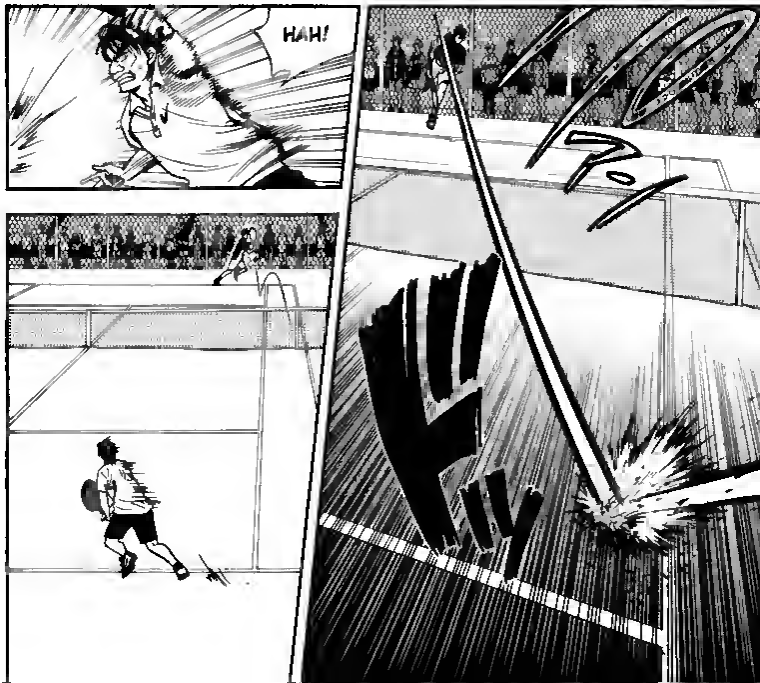
T/N: Muranbe is when someone is unable to focus or concentrate on his or her task, or when he or she is easily influenced by his or her feelings.


NO...RATHER, I THINK IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THEIR FEELINGS TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER...
IT MAY EVEN BE DUE TO A LACK OF CONCENTRATION". TAKUMA-SAN WILL OFTEN LOSE TO WEAKER OPPONENTS, SO THE QUESTION IS WHY HE NEVER LOSES AGAINST ARAYA.
MAYBE THEY JUST MATCH EACH OTHER WELL?

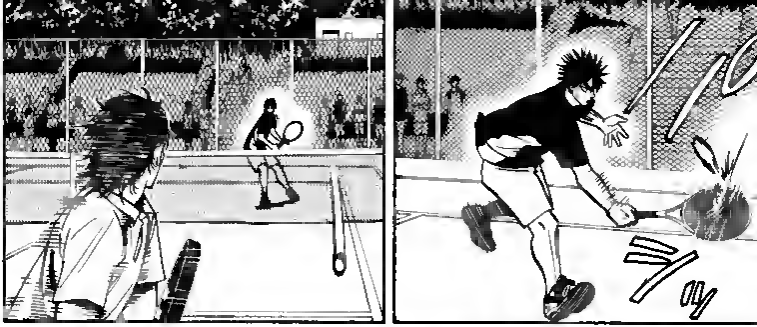

WHY DO YOU SAY "FATED"?
THEY'VE BOTH BEEN PRETTY STRONG SINCE THEIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DAYS, AND HAVE COMPETED AGAINST EACH OTHER OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
PEOPLE SAY THAT NEITHER ONE IS REALLY MUCH STRONGER THAN THE OTHER, BUT TAKUMA-SAN HAS WON EVERY SINGLE TIME.

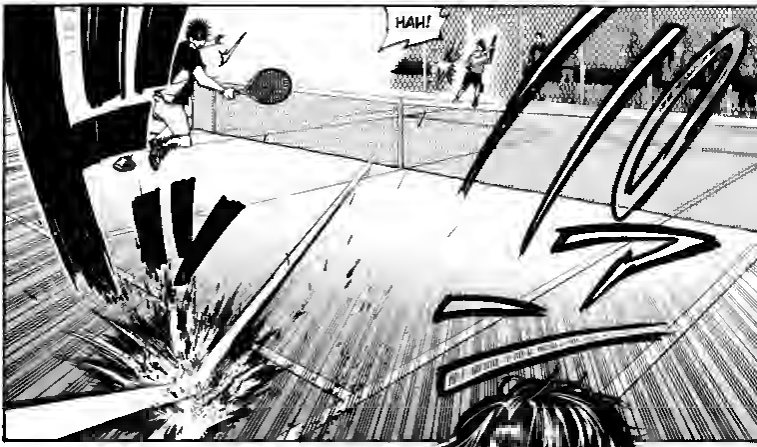
WHOA, THAT WAS FAST!
NO WAY! THAT HAD TO HAVE BEEN OVER 200KM/H!
IF THAT HAD MADE IT IN, IT WOULD'VE BEEN AN ACE FOR SURE!

I WONDER HOW ARAYA-KUN PLANS TO BREAK HERE
AGAINST TAKUMA-SAN'S REALLY STRONG SERVES... THAT'S SOMETHING I COULDN'T EVEN BEGIN TO COMPETE WITH
ALL THAT SPEED AND POWER...
HOW ARE YOU GOING TO BRING THEM OUT, ARAYA-KUN?


HAH!

HAH!
!?
!



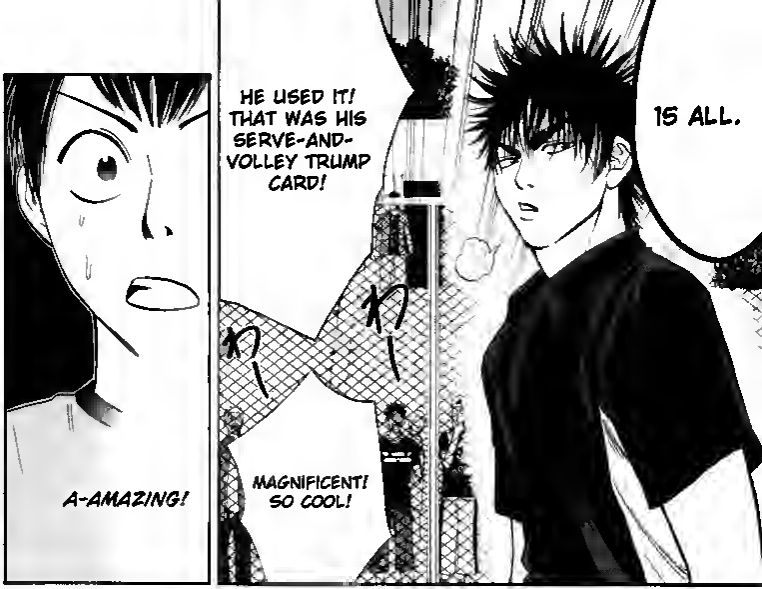

HAH!

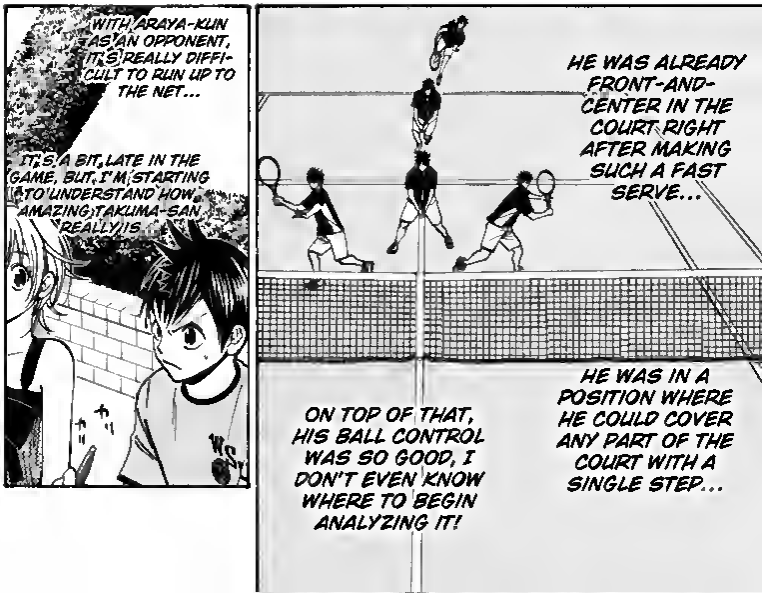
HELL YEAH!
LOVE 15.

WHOA! ARAYA COUNTERED FIRST!
ARAYA! WIN TODAY'S GAME TOO!
HIS SHOUT IS AS POWERFUL AS USUAL!!
THAT WAS A GOOD SHOT..HE KEPT THE BALL LOW... PRETTY SMART.

I GUESS YOU LEARNED A THING OR TWO IN YOUR MATCH AGAINST MARUO...
I SAY THAT, BUT...
THAT KID IS ALWAYS HANGING AROUND ME EVERY DAY ALL THE TIME.

KUH!
KUH!
HE'S ALREADY IN FRONT OF THE NET!


15 ALL.
HE USED IT! THAT WAS HIS SERVE-AND-VOLLEY TRUMP CARD!
MAGNIFICENT! SO COOL!
A-AMAZING!


WITH ARAYA-KUN AS AN OPPONENT, IT'S REALLY DIFFICULT TO RUN UP TO THE NET...
IT'S A BIT LATE IN THE GAME, BUT, I'M STARTING TO UNDERSTAND HOW AMAZING TAKUMA-SAN REALLY IS.
HE WAS ALREADY FRONT-AND-CENTER IN THE COURT RIGHT AFTER MAKING SUCH A FAST SERVE...
HE WAS IN A POSITION WHERE HE COULD COVER ANY PART OF THE COURT WITH A SINGLE STEP...
ON TOP OF THAT, HIS BALL CONTROL WAS SO GOOD, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN ANALYZING IT!

HAH!

NOW, THIS IS HOW YOU PLAY TENNIS!

EVEN IF I SUFFERED A BUNCH OF LOSSES PILING UP ONE AFTER THE OTHER, AND LOST THE WILL TO PLAY TENNIS, I WOULD NEVER HAVE THE GUTS TO SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
I COULD NEVER SAY, "I'M GIVING UP ON BEING A PRO" OR ANYTHING.

ARAYA... YOU'RE REALLY AMAZING.

I TAKE PRIDE IN JUST THAT SINGLE POINT.

BUT,
EVEN SO, AGAINST YOU IN PARTICULAR, I HAVE NO DESIRE TO LOSE AT ALL.
"I WON'T LOSE AGAINST ANYONE SERIOUSLY AIMING TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL."

I WILL BECOME A PRO!
HAH!
BUT...THERE'S NO POINT IN BEING PROUD OF THAT ANYMORE.
HAH!
NO MATTER WHICH MATCH, I WILL NOT LOSE!

WITH EVERY BALL, HE AIMS TO GET THE POINT WITH VOLLEYS.
OR SO I'VE SEEN SO FAR.
BUT...I'M SEEING EACH ONE BIT BY BIT...
HE'S GREATER THAN EVER.

I'M STARTING TO SEE
JUST HOW FAR TAKUMA-SAN REALLY IS FROM ME!

WITH AN ATTACK PATTERN LIKE THAT, AND BY DIVERSIFYING MY ARTILLERY, EVEN A GUY LIKE ME, WITH NO REAL HEIGHT OR REACH, COULD DO THAT...
I GET IT...SO BETTER NOT LET TAKUMA-SAN RUN UP TOWARDS THE NET ...
THAT'S THE PICTURE I'M SEEING HERE, THEN?

GAME SET AND MATCH. WON BY EGAWA TAKUMA.
COUNT: 4-6, 7-5, 7-5.
WSU

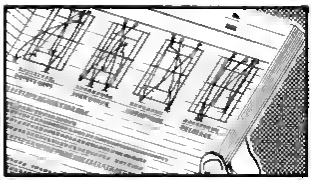
HEY.
YOU REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU BEFORE THE GAME?
YEAH.
7
5
FORGET I SAID IT.
I FOUND OUT TODAY...THAT I CAN GET WAY, WAY STRONGER.
That's why I said you'd better not profess that
ANY PERSON WHO GIVES UP IS PRETTY BAD...
BEING A PRO AND EVERYTHING ELSE COMES AFTER THAT!
WITH A LITTLE MORE TIME, I'LL BE ABLE TO BEAT YOU!

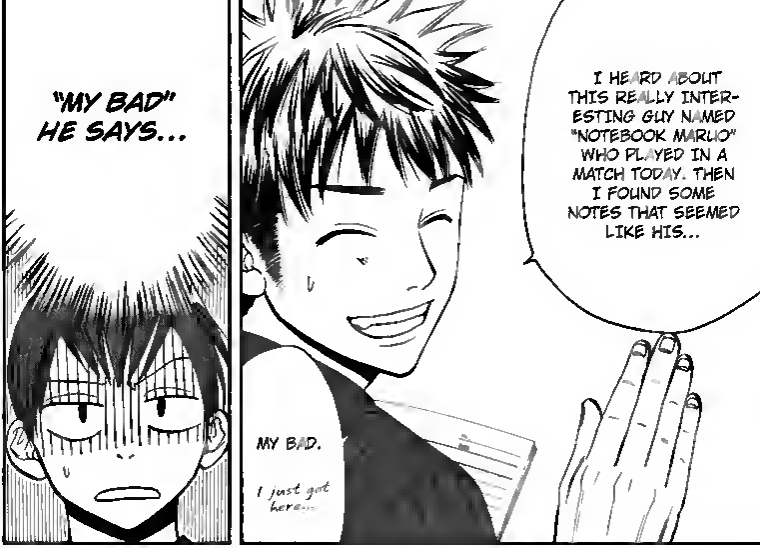
HUH...IT'S FINALLY ALL OVER.
YEP.
AH, BUT THERE'S STILL THE AWARD CEREMONY TO GET THROUGH.
THE TOP 4 ALL GET AWARDED, SO YOU GET AN AWARD TOO, EI-CHAN!
PUT AWAY YOUR NOTES AND GET READY FOR THE CEREMONY!
AH, OKAY! I GET IT ALREADY!
...THIS IS MY FIRST AWARDS CEREMONY SINCE GETTING PERFECT ATTENDANCE IN SCHOOL.
HMM ...?

AH!
H-HEY THERE ...

WH-WHAT THE HELL IS THIS GUY DOING?!

#47: WHAT WOULD YOU DO?




"MY BAD" HE SAYS...
I HEARD ABOUT THIS REALLY INTERESTING GUY NAMED "NOTEBOOK MARUO" WHO PLAYED IN A MATCH TODAY. THEN I FOUND SOME NOTES THAT SEEMED LIKE HIS...
MY BAD.
I just got here...

HUH? OH, THAT...? IN MY GAME EARLIER, I HAD TO CALCULATE THE PROBABILITY OF THE NEXT SERVE COMING WIDE, HEAD-ON, OR DOWN THE CENTER.
THIS ONE!
BY THE WAY, WHAT'S THIS FORMULA FOR?

SPEAKING OF WHICH, WHAT WERE YOU DOING BEFORE I CAME AROUND?!
WH-WHAT AM I DOING ANSWERING HIS QUESTIONS AS IF IT WERE THE MOST NATURAL THING TO DO IN THE WORLD?!
WHOA, NO WAY! YOU CALCULATED THIS WHEN YOU CHANGED COURTS?! THAT'S AWESOME!

AND YOU RECORDED ALL OF YOUR OTHER RALLIES HERE, TOO?!
He ignored me?!
THAT...WAS FOR ME TO REFLECT ON EVERYTHING AND DO SOME IMAGE TRAINING ONCE I GOT HOME..
REALLY NOW!
Seriously, why am I answering his questions..?
YOU COME UP WITH SOME PRETTY INTERESTING STUFF.
AHAHA-HAHA!
HUH I GET IT NOW.
CONTINUING ON
Ohhhh
WHAT THE HELL
IS WITH THIS GUY?!
EXCUSE ME...!
AH, CRAP! IT'S ALREADY THIS LATE?!
THEY'RE GONNA BE SOOO TICKED OFF! SERIOUSLY TICKED OFF!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, YOU DUMBASS?!

HEY NOW.
I'M HEADING OVER THERE AS WE SPEAK.

YOU KNOW COACH MIURA, RIGHT? THE GUY WHO LOOKS LIKE A BULLDOG?
I'VE GOT A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU, NOTEBOOK-KUN, SINCE YOU'RE PART OF STC, SO HEAR ME OUT, 'KAY?
HUH?!
AH... YEAH.
BUT I'VE GOT TO GET GOING!
AH, MAN! I CAME HERE JUST TO GIVE MY GREETINGS AND EVERYTHING!
Notebook-kun?
THANKS A LOT. REALLY INTERESTING STUFF THERE, NOTEBOOK-KUN.

TELL HIM THAT A GUY NAMED IKE SOUJI TOLD YOU THAT.
Thanks a bunch.
TELL HIM I'M GOING TO COME OVER AND GIVE HIM MY GREETINGS PROPERLY THIS TIME AROUND.

IKE SOUJI ...
AH!
I KESOUJI?
IKESOU JI ...?
I'VE HEARD THAT FROM SOMEWHERE BEFORE.
WSU

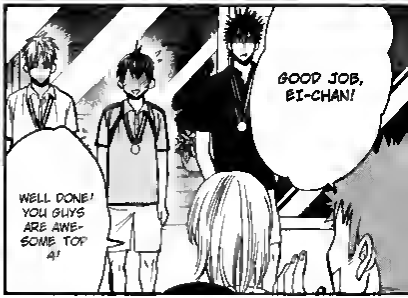
THE GENIUS IKE SOUJI
IKE MAKES A TRIUMPHANT RETURN FROM AMERICA TO DEBUT IN THE ATG OPEN! HE HAS MADE THE TOP 6 FOR THREE YEARS IN AMERICA IN THE ATP TOUR! HIS WORLD RANKING HAS SKYROCKETED UP TO 59TH PLACE! THIS BOY OF EXCEPTIONAL TALENT IS CURRENTLY AIMING TO BE IN THE WORLD'S TOP 16.
HE'S A HIGH SCHOOLER RANKED IN THE TOP 10 IN JAPAN...
HE'S ALL OVER THE TENNIS MAGAZINES...

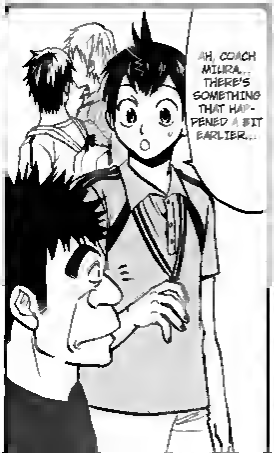
THE CLOSING CEREMONY WILL BE STARTING SOON. AS THE TOP 4 IN EACH AGE DIVISION WILL BE AWARDED, PLEASE GATHER IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING.
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!
HEY, ISN'T THAT

I'M COUNTING ON YOU FOR THIS, SOUJI! THERE'S GOING TO BE A VERY IMPORTANT DISCUSSION TODAY CONCERNING YOUR CONTRACT!
I-I'M SORRY... THERE WAS A JUNIOR TENNIS TOURNAMENT AT A LOCAL TENNIS CLUB, AND I THOUGHT I WAS JUST GOING TO ASK AROUND ABOUT MY PREVIOUS COACH AND GIVE HIM MY GREETINGS...
I SEE... YOU SAID THERE WAS SOMEONE THERE WHO CAUGHT YOUR EYE?
CALL IN PROGRESS
01:23
NO, I DIDN'T SEE ANY OF THE MATCHES AT ALL.
HUH?
BUT THERE WAS THIS WEIRD GUY THERE.
ムキ ムキ

IN THE TOP 4 WERE MARUO EIICHIROU AND OOBAYASHI RYOU.
IN THE MEN'S 18-AND-UNDER SINGLES DIVISION, FIRST PLACE GOES TO EGAWA TAKUMA, WITH ARAYA HIROSHI AS THE RUNNER-UP.

WISH I'D PLAYED AGAINST YOU THIS YEAR, TOO.
Con-grats
TO THINK THAT THE MARUO-KUN I PLAYED ONE MATCH AGAINST LAST YEAR IS NOW STANDING NEXT TO ME. FEELS SOMEWHAT STRANGE...
O-OOBAYASHI-KUN

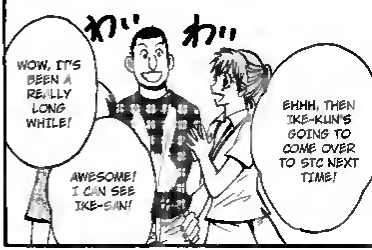

GOOD JOB, EI-CHAN!
WELL DONE! YOU GUYS ARE AWE-SOME TOP 4!

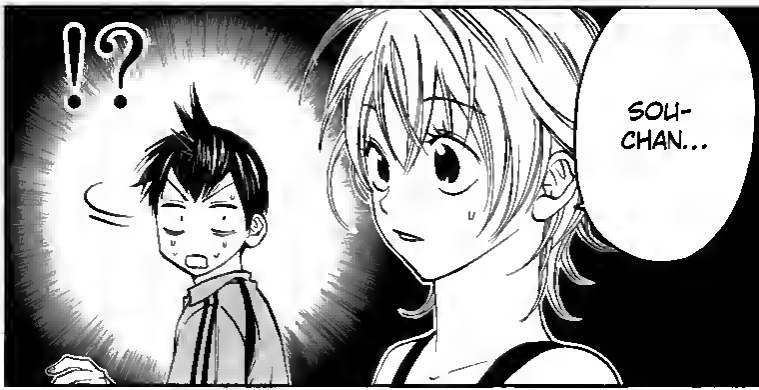

AH, COACH MIURA... THERE'S SOMETHING THAT HAP-PENED A BIT EARLIER...

MARUO WAS BLESSED WITH GOOD FORTUNE IN THE TOURNAMENT THIS TIME AROUND
Considering who he was up against, Miyagawa and Inaba, for example
WELL, WHATEVER. YOU CAN'T GET INTO THE TOP 4 WITH LUCK ALONE, ANYWAY
NAH. HE WAS TOTALLY UNLUCKY TO HAVE TO GO UP AGAINST ARAYA.

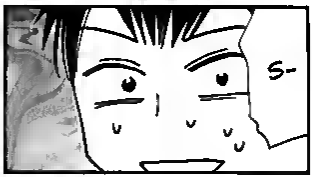
IKE SOUJI?!
そわそわ
HE'S ALREADY GONE, YUKICHI-KUN.
MASTER?!
YOU CAME?! WHERE ARE YOU, MASTER?!
Y-YES...
I SEE. I SEE...SO HE'S ALREADY COME BACK HOME, HUH?
……

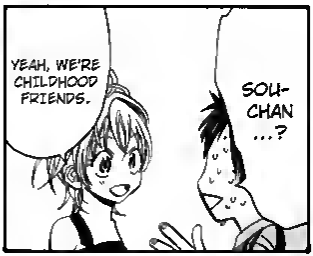
WH-WHAT...? EVERYONE KNOWS HIM?


わい わい
WOW, IT'S BEEN A REALLY LONG WHILE!
AWESOME! I CAN SEE IKE-SAN!
EHHH, THEN IKE-KUN'S GOING TO COME OVER TO STC NEXT TIME!


!?
SOU-CHAN...

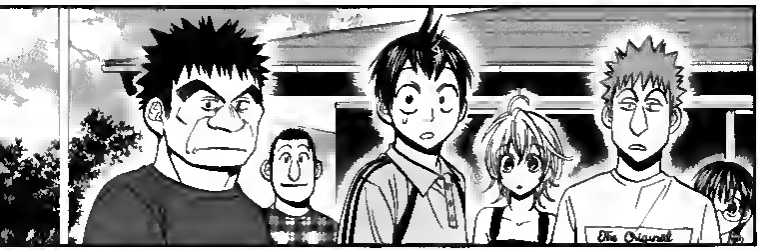
HE'S IN THE SAME YEAR AS YOU, MARUO-KUN. THREE YEARS AGO, THERE WEREN'T ANY JAPANESE OPPONENTS HIS AGE, SO HE WENT TO STUDY ABROAD IN FLORIDA
CH-CHILDHOOD FRIENDS?!

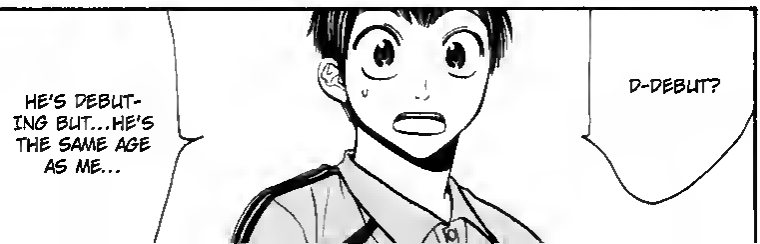

S-

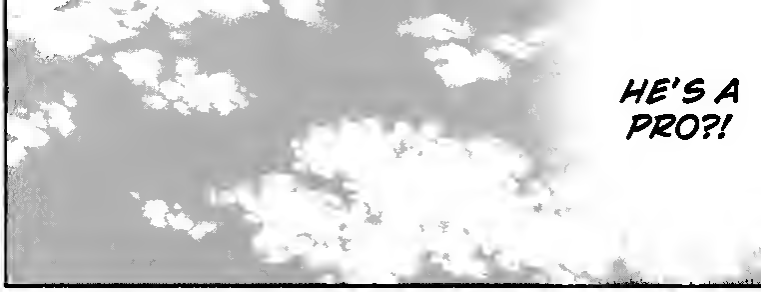

YEAH, WE'RE CHILDHOOD FRIENDS.
SOU-CHAN...?

IT'S FOR THE ATG OPEN.
WHAT'S A GUY LIKE HIM DOING IN JAPAN RIGHT NOW?
Just back to visit?
I READ ABOUT THAT IN A MAGAZINE.
HE'S A COMPLETE GENIUS!
HE EVEN WON IN HIS MATCHES OVER THERE, AND HIS WORLD RANKING SHOT UP! ISN'T THAT AWESOME?!

HE'S MAKING HIS GLORIOUS DEBUT IN THE ONLY TOURNAMENT IN JAPAN THAT GATHERS THE WORLD'S MOST STRONGEST.




HE'S DEBUTING BUT...HE'S THE SAME AGE AS ME...
D-DEBUT?


HE'S A PRO?!

THOSE WHO PLAYED IN THE TOURNAMENT REST EASY
EVERYONE ELSE HEAD BACK TO STC AND PRAC-TICE

THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME LEFT BEFORE THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR TOURNAMENT
HEAD

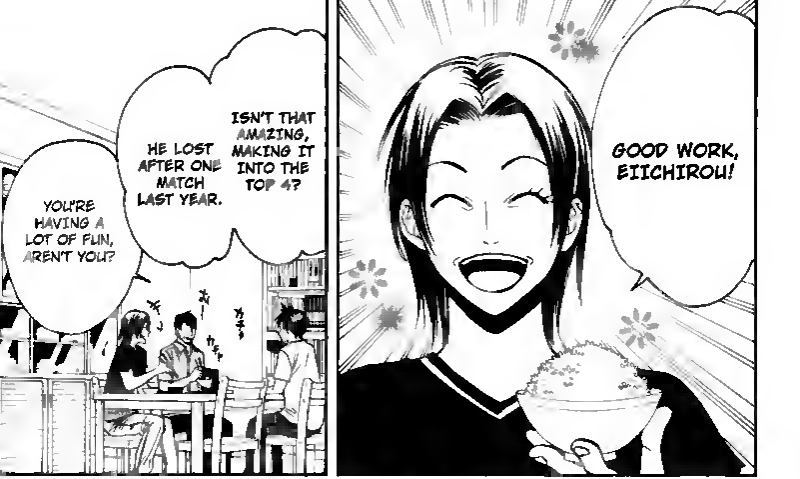
COACH,
I'M HEADING BACK, TOO
HEAD

ALL JAPAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL INTER-HIGHS ALL JAPAN INDOOR ETC.
GRADE 1, NATIONAL LEVEL
GRADE 2, KANTOU REGIONAL LEVEL
KANTOU JUNIOR ETC.
THIS TOURNAMENT
EVEN IF YOU PUSH YOURSELF AND RUSH YOUR PRACTICE OVER THE NEXT MONTH, YOU'RE LIMITED TO JUST WHAT YOU CAN DO!
DO IT RIGHT FROM THE START!
ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR... THE TOURNAMENT THAT DECIDES THE NUMBER ONE ATHLETE AMONGST ALL THE JUNIORS IN JAPAN...
OH HOH, YOU SURE KNOW YOUR STUFF.
I'M PLAYING IN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR TOURNAMENT, TOO! DON'T FORGET!
THIS WON'T BE OVERLOOKED!
うわ
I LOST THIS TIME BUT IT WON'T HAPPEN NEXT TIME
AH, MIYAGAWA KUN AND OOHAYASHI KUN
YONEX
HE STARTS HIS SQUAWKIN AGAIN...
I'LL WIN NEXT TIIIII-IME!
BECAUSE HE LOST?
WHY'S HE RUNNING?

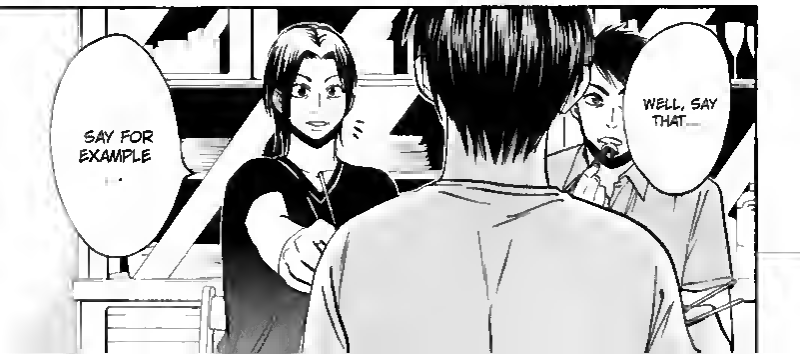
I MEAN WHEN WE GO UP AGAINST EACH OTHER AGAIN, IN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR.
HUH...? BUT ANIKI CAN'T ENTER THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR THIS YEAR, RIGHT?
YEAH.
OH THAT'S RIGHT WHEN IT WAS TIME FOR REGISTERING YOUR RECORDS WEREN'T I GUESS YOU COULDN'T GET IN YET...
SORRY... I DIDN'T THINK IT'D BE ALL THAT WEIRD EVEN IF YOU GOT IN SORRY ABOUT THAT...
HA HA HA...
THAT SUCKS. BUT HEY THERE ARE ALWAYS OTHER CHANCES!
WE'LL BE ON THE INTER-HIGH TEAM, SO WE'LL BE PRETTY BUSY.
GOES TO THE SAME SCHOOL
THE PEOPLE HERE ARE KIND OF AMAZING...
I'M DOING IT, TOO!
KUN
That's tall!
Hey!
The Original
YUMAN

HUH?
EI-CHAN, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?
I HAVE TO ENTER THE TOURNA-MENT, TOO.
AH...
UM...

AH, YES SIR..
LET'S HAVE A NICE, LONG TALK ABOUT THIS AFTER-WARDS.
YES SIR
REST WELL FOR TODAY


GOOD WORK, EIICHIROU!
ISN'T THAT AMAZING, MAKING IT INTO THE TOP 4?
HE LOST AFTER ONE MATCH LAST YEAR.
YOU'RE HAVING A LOT OF FUN, AREN'T YOU?

もぐもぐ
....
I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND MUCH ABOUT TENNIS BUT YOU'RE GETTING PRETTY GOOD, PRETTY FAST, AREN'T YOU?
YEP.
YOU PRACTICED SO SERIOUSLY FOR THE ENTIRE YEAR IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE THAT IT PAID OFF
It was the Top 4


WELL, SAY THAT...
SAY FOR EXAMPLE...

IF I SAID I WANTED TO BECOME A PRO-FESSIONAL,
WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Y-YOU WANT TO BECOME A PROFES-SIONAL?
WHAT... ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
LIKE I SAID, IT'S JUST HYPO-THETICAL!
#48: A DANGEROUS PERSON
THE GUY I PLAYED TODAY IS TRYING TO GO PRO... SO I THOUGHT I'D TRY ASKING ABOUT IT, MYSELF.
Ugh
OH, I SEE, I SEE! WELL IT'S HARDLY THAT EASY TO MAKE YOUR WAY UP IN THE TENNIS WORLD, IS IT?
You surprised me for a moment
IT'S LIKE SHE'S SAYING HE WON'T EVEN COME CLOSE...
OH AND THAT'S RIGHT... IT'S NEARLY TIME FOR YOU TO FIGURE OUT WHAT SCHOOL YOU WANT TO GO TO.
...

YEAH...

YOU'RE DONE WITH THE TOURNAMENT YOU'VE BEEN WANTING TO PLAY IN, SO YOU CAN FINALLY CONCENTRATE ON YOUR STUDIES, CAN'T YOU?

カキ
カキ
カキ

...
ガビ
ガビ

A PRO, HUH...

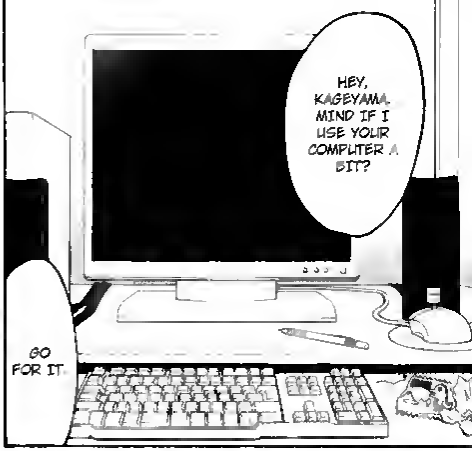
ピタッ
Points to Reflect on Today
The wish to become a profess

KAGEYAMA ...? WHAT'S HE WANT?
ou by KDDI
RECEIVED MAIL
From Kageyama Kyoku
Sub Something I wanna talk about.
Do you have practice tomorrow? Well, even if you do, you've got some extra time now that the tournament's over, right? Wanna come hang out at my place, or I can come over. Whichever. Actually

THE NEXT DAY

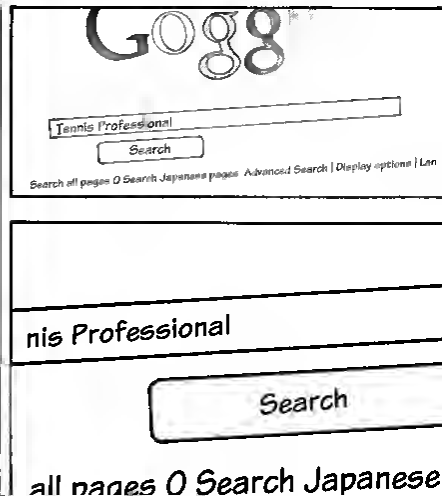
ARE YOU GOING TO GO PRACTICE TODAY?
YEAH, IN THE AFTERNOON.
IT TAKES ME A DAY TO GET THROUGH THREE PAGES. SO I'M NOT DONE WITH MY ENGLISH HOMEWORK YET.
OKAY, COOL. I'LL BORROW THIS AGAIN LATER.
MAN, THANKS A TON, EI-CHAN!

YEAH.
PRETTY RARE FOR YOU TO USE ONE THOUGH.
YOU'VE GOT ONE IT YOUR HOUSE, TOO, THOUGH, RIGHT?


HEY, KAGEYAMA. MIND IF I USE YOUR COMPUTER A BIT?
GO FOR IT.

HELL NO!
DOCTOR

You're saying you can't use it in the living room and that means
. HUH?! SOMETHING YOU CAN'T SHOW YOUR PARENTS? WHAT IS IT? PERVERTED PICS?
BUT IT'S IN THE LIVING ROOM.
English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Tennis Professional
Search
Search all pages O Search Japanese pages Advanced Search | Display options | Lan
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"I DON'T KNOW," HE SAYS. PEOPLE NORMALLY LOOK THAT KIND OF STUFF UP IF THEY ARE THINKING ABOUT IT.
SHUT UP!
I DON'T KNOW.
THAT'S WHY I'M LOOK-ING IT UP.
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA!
ARE YOU SERIOUSLY THINKING ABOUT BE-COMING A PRO?!

Article 2

Amateurs In compliance to the Japan Tennis Association's statutes and regulations of Article I of Contestant Regulations, must always demonstrate all times. In addition with regards to incurred expenditures and conferr assumed that the player will carry feelings of gratitude without forgetti own pride as well.

2 Amateurs may not participate in a registered tournament (official to the main branch, regional branch or city branches are sponsored supervised, supported, or authorized) in the main association alongside of re associations.

Moreover within the number of authorized tournaments each participa register individually in the following A Grade Tournament All-Japan Veteran Champion ship Tournament Regional Tennis Championship Tournament and the Regional Veteran Championship Tournament (including the elimination matches within each separate tournament).

Article 3

s registering on their own must, in addition to the filing out the necessary on on the designated forms, include the required fee to register in a

t

stration fee is 3,000 yen per year From that fee 1 000 yen will go to the y, and such other branches, and the leftover 2 000 yen are sent to the main

is, as based on the regnistions of Article I of Contestant Regulations, will ee of the international Tennis Federation alongside the main association's dition professionals are recognized as individuals receiving monetary or ins in matches in officially-run tournaments by the main association.

sionals must, in addition to filling out the necessary information on the designated forms, submit or file their registration to the prefectural branch they are affiliated with.

2 The registration fee is 10,000 yen per year From that fee, half will go to each person's own prefectural branch, and the other half will be sent to the main branch as a fee recognized by each person's level subdivision.

Those wishing to register as new professionals are to fill out the necessary information of the attached application (A), include five photographs showing ones face, and petition to the Japan Tennis Association tournament committee.

1.

2. The tournament committee will run a screening of the documents as dependent on the petitioner's submitted application (A).

3. ...mittee will present the screening results of the applicant's level subdivisi... ...standards) in a meeting with the director general. Should the ... ...g, it will then be presented in a meeting with the manag... ...cation is once again approved in this meeting, from th... ...tion will be allowed.

4. ...n of the approval in the ferm of a report from ... ...rnament committee will notify the applicant's ...

5. ...f the necessary information in the attached ap... ...red. ...0 yen registration fee in with the application (B) and ... ...personal prefectural branch. ※The portion sent to the prefectural branch is based in the professional... ☆In the case there is an affiliate prefectural tennis association to send the...

SAY WHAT? NO CONTEST OR ANYTHING?

You can become a pro just by paying 10,000 yen?

WELL, TO MAKE IT SHORT, I HAVE TO FILL OUT THE NECESSARY INFORMATION IN THE DOCUMENTS AND SUBMIT THEM.

AND I'LL NEED AROUND 10,000 YEN AT THAT POINT.

I DON'T REALLY GET IT ALL, BUT IT SEEMS LIKE IT'S BASED ON THE JOP RANKINGS...

1. Tournament Professional Players
(1) Singles JOP Ranking above 100th Place
(2) Doubles JOP Ranking above 50th Place
Applicable to whichever next contestant

...egistered Players (Quality being of Pro level, ...s received)
JOP singles ranking under 101st Place, and the ...ing under 51st Place, or is a JOP singles/doub... holder and practicing tennis as a main occupa...
However, depending on the person's petit... month the athlete enters into the JOP singles ... 100th Place, or the doubles ranking of 50th Place ... can apply to be a Tournament Professional Player ...

NO ...AFTER THAT, YOUR LEVEL WILL BE DETERMINED IN A SCREENING...DECIDED BETWEEN A TOURNAMENT PLAYER AND A REGISTERED PLAYER?

YOU'RE TAKING NOTES?

How about using the printer?

WHETHER YOU GET PRIZE MONEY OR NOT, BOTH PROS AND AMATEURS CAN PLAY IN THE SAME MATCH TOGETHER.

かきかき

FIRST, I'VE...GOT TO ...AY IN A HIGH-LEVEL MATCH LIKE THAT.

I see I see

HUH...

...TOR

FI.BELVOIR

SPECIAL SERVICE

SO ANYWAY, FOR NOW, I'LL WIN, RAISE MY JOP RANKING,
AND FROM THERE, DECIDE IF I REALLY WANT TO TRY MY H ND AT BEING A PRO AFTER ALL.
UM, HEY, EI-CHAN?
I THINK A LIFE WHERE YOU GET INTO A GOOD UNIVERSITY AND A GOOD COM-PANY AND PURSUE TENNIS AS A HOBBY
WILL BE FUN AND MAKE YOU HAPPY, TOO.
TRUE.

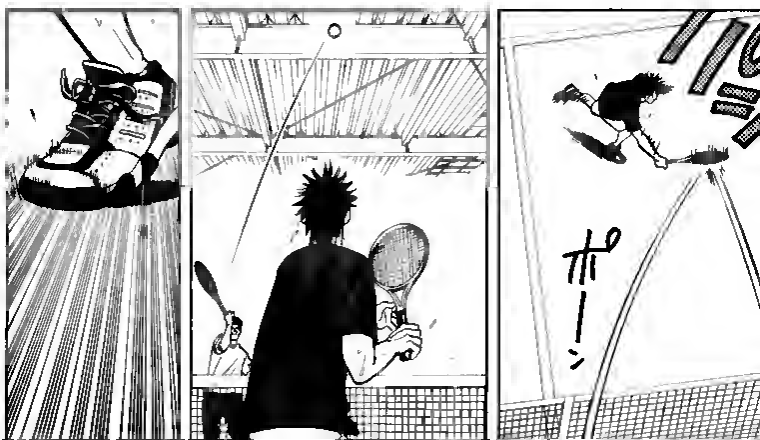
BUT HONESTLY...AFTER SEEING YOUR MATCH YESTERDAY, WHEN I THINK OF THREE OR EVEN FIVE YEARS DOWN THE ROAD...I'D KINDA LIKE TO SEE HOW GOOD YOUR TENNIS WILL GET FROM HERE ON OUT.

OH YEAH. Let's eat
KOU-JIROU, WHAT ARE WE HAVING FOR LUNCH?
AH, THANKS. SORRY TO INTRUDE ON YOU GUYS.

WELL, BOTH ARE MY TRUE FEELINGS ON THE MATTER. MAYBE YOU'RE JUST LISTENING IN CARELESSLY.
...WHICH ONE IS IT?

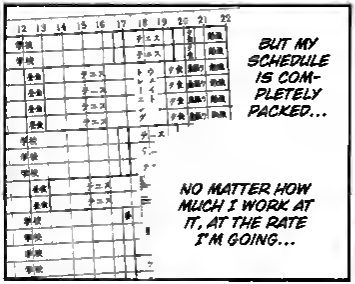
ALL RIGHT, I'M ABOUT TO HEAD OUT
THANKS, KAGEYAMA.
YOU'VE GOT MY THANKS, TOO. GOOD LUCK WITH PRACTICE.

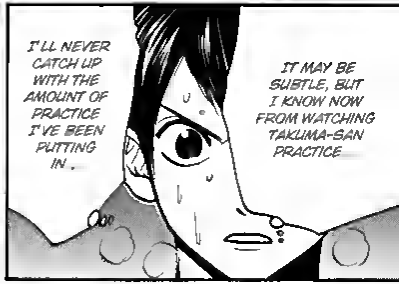
HAH!
HAH!
HAH!

ﾌﾟﾛｰﾝ

ﾎﾟｰﾝ

EXACTLY! PUT YOUR ENERGY INTO EVERY SINGLE BALL!
HAH!
パーン
NEXT.
WOW
FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN TAKUMA THAT SERIOUS.
パァン

EVERYONE'S WORKING REALLY HARD FOR THE UPCOMING ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR.
TAKUMA-SAN'S STARTED GOING ALL OUT IN PRACTICE.


BUT MY SCHEDULE IS COMPLETELY PACKED...
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I WORK AT IT, AT THE RATE I'M GOING...


I'LL NEVER CATCH UP WITH THE AMOUNT OF PRACTICE I'VE BEEN PUTTING IN.
IT MAY BE SUBTLE, BUT I KNOW NOW FROM WATCHING TAKUMA-SAN PRACTICE...

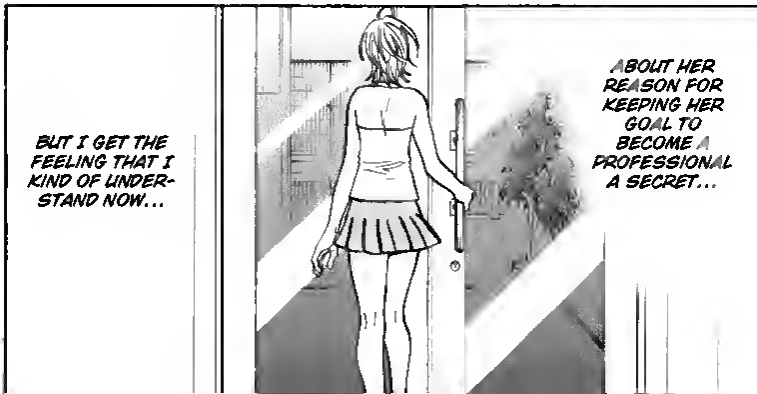
HM?

I'LL PROBABLY BE LEFT BEHIND.

HEY, EI-CHAN, ARE YOU GOING TO THE ATG OPEN NEXT WEEK?
THE ATG OPEN?
AH, YOU MADE IT.
NAC-CHAN?
IT'S SOU-CHAN'S DEBUT MATCH
A PRO MATCH?!
SOU-CHAN... SHE MEANS IKE SOUJI... THAT GUY'S PLAYING IN THE TOUR-NAMENT.

YEAH, I'LL GO! DEFINITELY!
OKAY! I'LL TEXT YOU THE DETAILS.
SORRY, I'VE GOT TO GO PRACTICE.
YEAH, THANKS!

OH YEAH... NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, I LOST TO ARAYA-KUN, SO I COULDN'T REALLY ASK...
C-COULD THIS BE...A DATE?!
はっ


BUT I GET THE FEELING THAT I KIND OF UNDERSTAND NOW...
ABOUT HER REASON FOR KEEPING HER GOAL TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL A SECRET...

The Next Week. First day of the ATG Open.
AH!
WHOA, SO MANY PEOPLE.

AH, OVER THERE, TOO!
You're moving about way too freely!

Ah... it tastes good
So tasty!

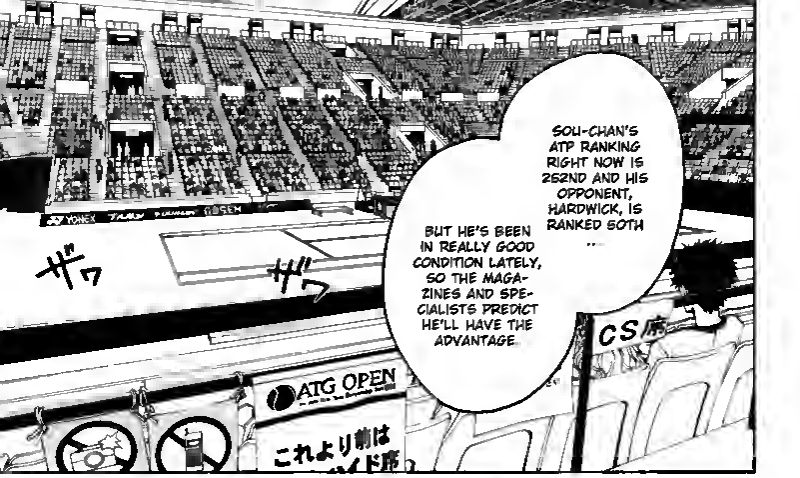
IT LOOKS SO GOOD!
AH... HOLD UP, NAC-CHAN!

AH, IT REALLY IS HIM

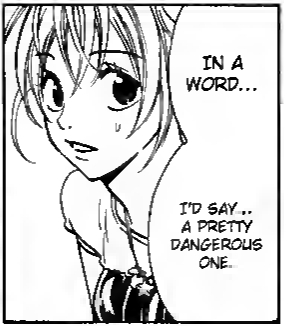
ATG OPEN
COME ON, WAIT
AR ALLIANCE

IKE SOU
池 爽児
ATP RANKING AT 382ND PLACE
MADE TOP 8 IN ATP TOUR
HIS TRIUMPHANT PROFESSIONAL DEBUT!

DID SHE GET LOST?!
WHERE ARE YOU, EI-CHAN?!


SOU-CHAN'S ATP RANKING RIGHT NOW IS 252ND AND HIS OPPONENT, HARDWICK, IS RANKED 50TH...
BUT HE'S BEEN IN REALLY GOOD CONDITION LATELY, SO THE MAGAZINES AND SPECIALISTS PREDICT HE'LL HAVE THE ADVANTAGE.
ATG OPEN
これより前は
CS席

!?

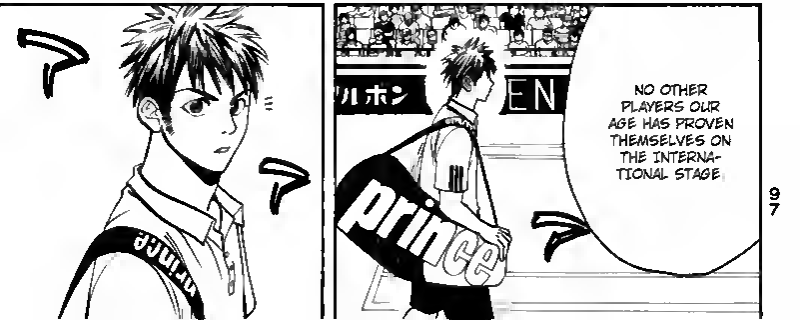

IN A WORD...
I'D SAY.. A PRETTY DANGEROUS ONE.

I'VE GOT A QUESTION... WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS THIS IKE-KUN?

ザワッ

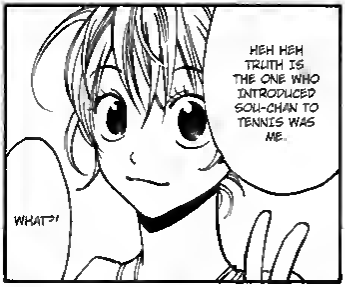
OH, THERE HE IS!
prince
adidas

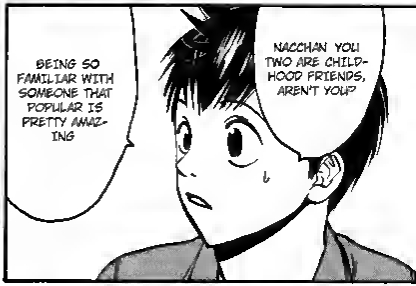
#49: THE CLINCHER
THE FIRST DAY OF THE ATG OPEN.
AT THE TENDER AGE OF 17, ATHLETE IKE SOUJI IS DEBUTING HERE WITH HIS FIRST PRO MATCH!
prince
IKE-KUN, YOU'RE SO COOL!
IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT THEY'D CHEER FOR HIM
WOW, HE HAS A LOT OF SUPPORTERS
IKE! WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU!
JAPAN'S TENNIS IS DEPENDING ON YOU!

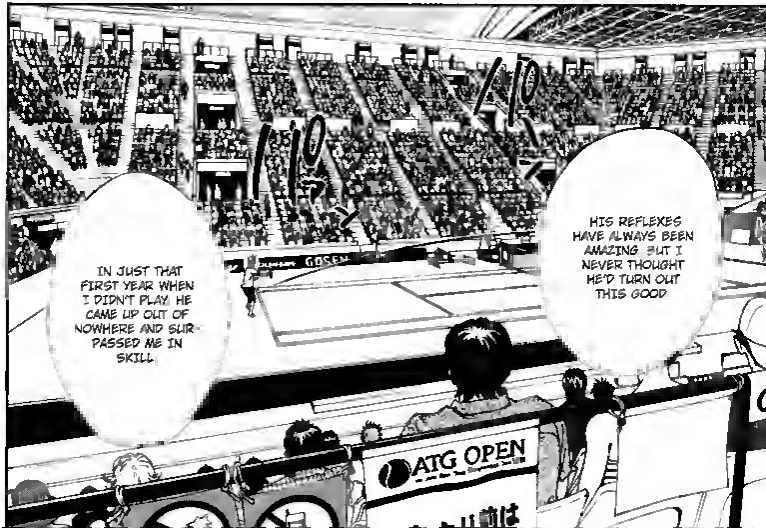

prince
NO OTHER PLAYERS OUR AGE HAS PROVEN THEMSELVES ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

LOOKS LIKE HE NOTICED YOU, TOO, EI-CHAN.
HE... SURE IS LAID-BACK.

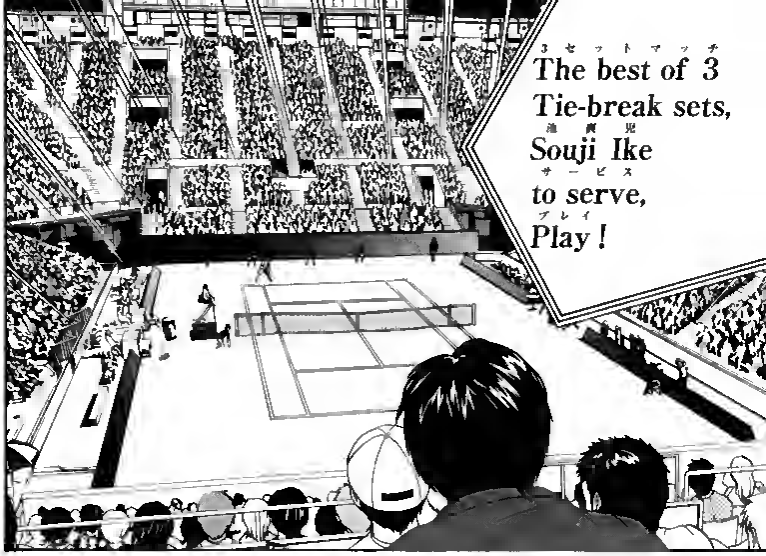
AH, SEE THERE? HE'S WAVING HIS HANDS.


HEH HEH TRUTH IS THE ONE WHO INTRODUCED SOU-CHAN TO TENNIS WAS ME.
WHAT?!


BEING SO FAMILIAR WITH SOMEONE THAT POPULAR IS PRETTY AMAZ-ING
NACCHAN YOU TWO ARE CHILD-HOOD FRIENDS, AREN'T YOU?

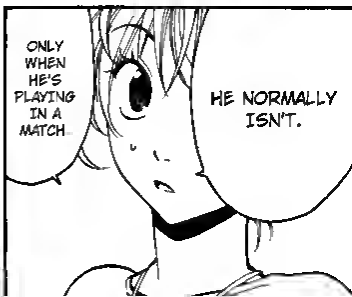

IN JUST THAT FIRST YEAR WHEN I DIDN'T PLAY, HE CAME UP OUT OF NOWHERE AND SUR-PASSED ME IN SKILL.
HIS REFLEXES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AMAZING. BUT I NEVER THOUGHT HE'D TURN OUT THIS GOOD
ATG OPEN

AT FIRST GLANCE, IT LOOKS LIKE JUST YOUR EVERYDAY PRACTICE, BUT IT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT.
HE DOESN'T MAKE ANY UNNECESSARY MOVEMENTS AT ALL WHEN HE HITS THE BALL BACK, AND IT'S SO SMOOTH IT'S SICKENING.
!!


3セットマッチ
The best of 3 Tie-break sets,
池 貴児
Souji Ike
サーピス
to serve,
プレイ
Play !

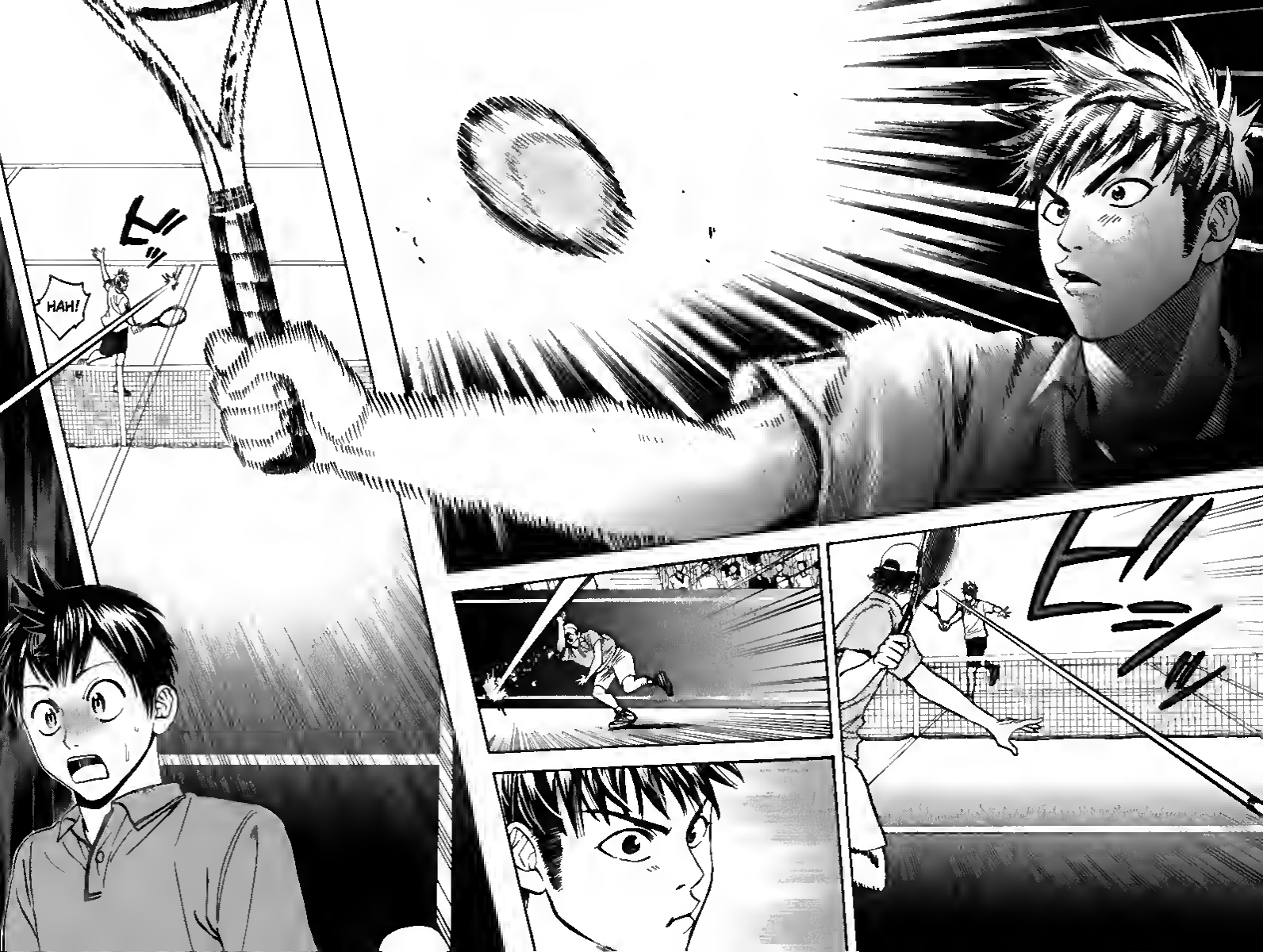
I GUESS YOU COULD SAY IT'S LIKE WHEN A FEROCIOUS ANIMAL SPOTS ITS PREY.
A FIRE LIGHTS UP AND NO ONE CAN STOP HIM AFTER THAT.

HEY NACCHAN.. WHAT DID YOU MEAN EARLIER WHEN YOU SAID HE WAS A "DANGEROUS PERSON"?


ONLY WHEN HE'S PLAYING IN A MATCH.
HE NORMALLY ISN'T.

HE REALLY LOOKS LIKE HE'S HAVING FUN WHEN BEATING DOWN HIS OPPONENTS.

HAH!

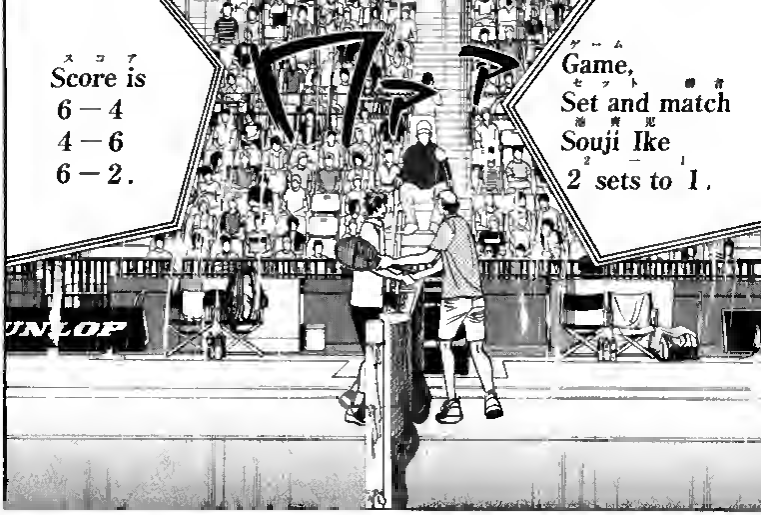

HAH!

ATC
GOT IT.
WITH A SINGLE GLIMPSE, I UNDERSTOOD.

IF IT WASN'T, HE WOULD NEVER HAVE MADE IT SO FAR.
THIS PERSON'S ENTIRE LIFE WAS MADE UP OF TENNIS.
AND EVERY DAY AFTER THIS, HE'S STILL GOING TO BE A PROFESSIONAL, THINKING SOLELY ABOUT TENNIS DAY BY DAY, AND WITHOUT LOSING SIGHT OF IT...
FOR THE VERY SAKE OF TENNIS HE WAKES UP IN THE MORNING, EATS HIS MEALS,
LOOKS, LISTENS, AND TALKS ABOUT SOMETHING...
THAT'S HOW HE'LL LIVE.

ぐっ

THAT SOUNDS REALLY NICE...


Score is
6 — 4
4 — 6
6 — 2.
Game,
Set and match
Souji Ike
2 sets to 1.

UH... YES.
YOU'VE WON YOUR FIRST PRO MATCH, HAVEN'T YOU?
WELL, THAT WAS A WONDERFUL VICTORY HE DISPLAYED US IN HIS PRO DEBUT MATCH. AN INTERVIEW WITH ATHLETE IKE SOUJI.

I'LL WORK HARD WITH MY NEXT MATCH AS WELL, AND HOPE THAT EVERYONE WILL SUPPORT ME!
I'D LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE OUT THERE. THANKS TO A LOT OF PEOPLE, I'VE FINALLY REACHED MY GOAL OF BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL, AND WAS ABLE TO GREATLY PERFORM WELL STARTING FROM MY VERY FIRST MATCH!

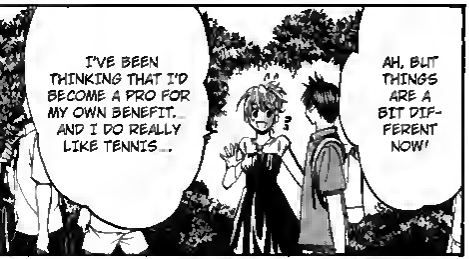
WELL DONE, IKE!
CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU GET THE CHAMPION-SHIP!
SOUJI-KUUUN, LOOK OVER HERE!

OH, WHAT'S WRONG, EI-CHAN? YOU LOOK A BIT OUT OF IT
AH, NAH, WELL, IT'S JUST...

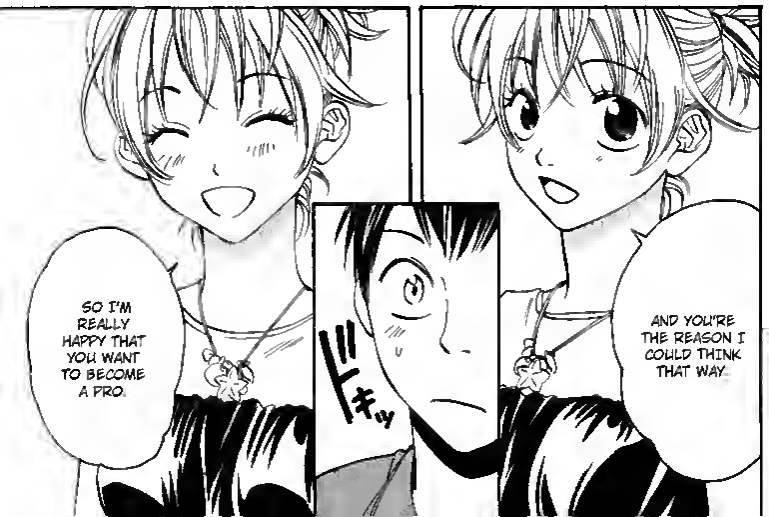
AH, I'M SO GLAD HE WON.
ITG OPEN

!!
W-WELL, SAY IF... IF I...
IF I SAID I WAS AIMING TO BE A PRO... WHAT WOULD YOU THINK?
S-SORRY... THAT WAS REALLY WEIRD TO BURST OUT WITH...
Ahahah
...
NO, I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL
I-I MEAN... THE REASON I WANTED TO BECOME A PRO WAS TO CATCH UP WITH SOU-CHAN.
R-REALLY NOW?
SORRY TO KEEP IT SUCH A SECRET... IT'S SUCH AN EMBARRASSING REASON THAT I COULDN'T SAY ANYTHING.
.....!?

ATG OPEN
SO I THOUGHT I'D TRY CLOSING IN ON HIM BIT BY BIT IF I COULD...
I'M THE ONE WHO FIRST TAUGHT HIM HOW TO PLAY. BUT HE RUSHED PAST ME LIKE IT WAS NOTHING


I'VE BEEN THINKING THAT I'D BECOME A PRO FOR MY OWN BENEFIT... AND I DO REALLY LIKE TENNIS...
AH, BUT THINGS ARE A BIT DIFFERENT NOW!

SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS
.....


SO I'M REALLY HAPPY THAT YOU WANT TO BECOME A PRO.
ドキッ
AND YOU'RE THE REASON I COULD THINK THAT WAY...

SO, THIS IS WHERE IT ALL BEGINS FOR US, HUH?

...YEAH!
BUT TO DO THAT... FIRST I'VE GOT TO...

SO, THIS IS WHERE IT ALL BEGINS FOR US, HUH?
#50: THE BEGINNING

FROM THIS MOMENT ON, I'M SETTING MY SIGHTS ON BECOMING A PRO...

BUT TO DO THAT, FIRST I'VE GOT TO...!
AND... AND SO...

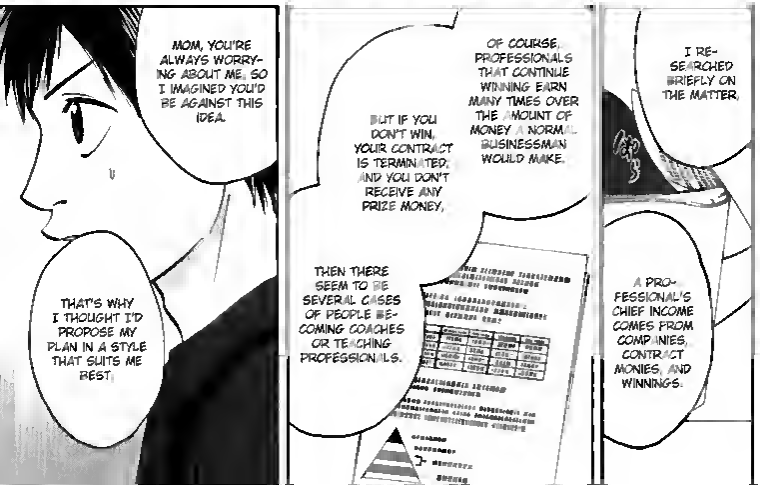
Maruo Eiichirou's Life Plan
I will now begin my presentation.
Please refer to the materials at your disposal.
Huh?

SO I'D LIKE BOTH OF YOU TO LISTEN TO ME SERIOUSLY, AND NOT TAKE THIS AS SOME KIND OF A JOKE.
I THOUGHT GETTING MY MEANING ACROSS WOULD BE EASIER IF YOU HAD THAT.
H-HOLD ON, EIICHIROU. WHAT IS THIS?
?
HUH...HE MAY BE OUR KID, BUT HE SURE GREW UP INTERESTINGLY...
What the heck is this?
THE POINT OF THE ENTIRE PRESENTATION
WELL FIRST THINGS FIRST
I HAVE NO CLUE OF WHAT'S GOING ON, BUT I UNDERSTAND YOUR DEDICATION AT LEAST.
...
THANK YOU!
I ASK FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHERE I'M COMING FROM.
!?
IS THAT I WANT TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL IN TENNIS.

I SAID THERE IS NO WAY YOU COULD BECOME A PROFESSIONAL SO EASILY. YOU KNOW THIS YOURSELF, DON'T YOU?
NOW, JUST HOLD ON A SECOND! ARE YOU SAYING THIS SERIOUSLY?!
I REJECT!
THIS IS OBVIOUS, BUT I'LL NEED TO PLAY AND KEEP WINNING IN HIGH-LEVEL MATCHES.
YOU HAVE THREE PAGES OF WRITTEN, DETAILED, INFORMATION REGARDING THE SPECIFICS OF BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL
U-UM.. COULD YOU PLEASE HEAR ME OUT ON THIS?
I CAN'T ENTER INTO THE TOURNAMENT YET.
LIKE YOU SAID, BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL ISN'T THAT EASY.
AT THE PREFECTURAL AND KANTOU LEVEL, YOU LEAVE BEHIND A TRACK RECORD, AND THERE ARE EVEN SOME MATCHES YOU CAN'T PARTICIPATE IN UNLESS YOU RAISE UP YOUR JUNIOR RANKING.
AT THAT POINT, THE MAJORITY OF CONTESTANTS ARE TRYING TO BECOME PROFESSIONALS. I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY THAT TOURNAMENT IS THE FIRST MAJOR HURDLE YOU HAVE TO JUMP OVER.
ALL JAPAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL INTER HIGHS
GRADE 1, NATIONAL LEVEL
GRADE 2, KANTOU REGIONAL LEVEL KANTOU JUNIOR, ETC.
GRADE 3-5, PREFECTURAL AND CITY LEVEL KANAGAWA JUNIOR ETC.
FOR EXAMPLE, THE "ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR" TOURNAMENT, IT GIVES JUNIOR ATHLETES LIKE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY IN SOME VERY HIGH LEVEL MATCHES.

SO I HAVE A REQUEST:
SO THAT I CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE NEXT ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR,
PLEASE LET ME FILL UP MY STUDY AND CRAM SCHOOL TIME COMPLETELY WITH TENNIS.

WHAT?! YOU'RE GOING TO QUIT CRAM SCHOOL AND STOP STUDYING?! JUST LISTEN TO YOURSELF!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT COLLEGE?!
IS THERE ANY GUARANTEE YOU'LL PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE BY BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL?!
HMM... YOU'RE RIGHT. TENNIS PROFESSIONALS DON'T SHOW UP ON TELEVISION MUCH


I RESEARCHED BRIEFLY ON THE MATTER.
OF COURSE, PROFESSIONALS THAT CONTINUE WINNING EARN MANY TIMES OVER THE AMOUNT OF MONEY A NORMAL BUSINESSMAN WOULD MAKE.
BUT IF YOU DON'T WIN, YOUR CONTRACT IS TERMINATED, AND YOU DON'T RECEIVE ANY PRIZE MONEY,
A PROFESSIONAL'S CHIEF INCOME COMES FROM COMPANIES, CONTRACT MONIES, AND WINNINGS.
THEN THERE SEEM TO BE SEVERAL CASES OF PEOPLE BECOMING COACHES OR TEACHING PROFESSIONALS.
MOM, YOU'RE ALWAYS WORRYING ABOUT ME, SO I IMAGINED YOU'D BE AGAINST THIS IDEA.
THAT'S WHY I THOUGHT I'D PROPOSE MY PLAN IN A STYLE THAT SUITS ME BEST.

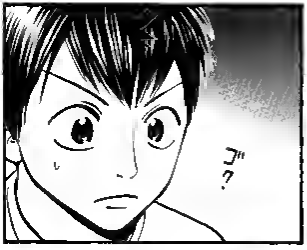
THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR IS IN AUGUST OF NEXT YEAR.
THAT'S ABOUT ONE YEAR FROM NOW.
I WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO LET ME CONCENTRATE SOLELY ON TENNIS UNTIL THEN.
AND IF I CAN'T WIN AT THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR,
I'LL COMPLETELY SWITCH GEARS AS BEST AS I CAN IN THE SUMMER OF MY SENIOR YEAR AND FOCUS ON MY COLLEGE EXAMS.
SO I'M ASKING YOU, PLEASE!
PLEASE LET ME HAVE ONE YEAR OF JUST TENNIS!
MAMA ALWAYS LIKE THAT
.....!!

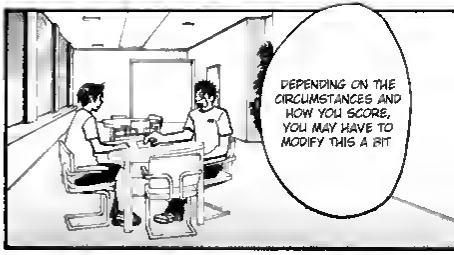
!!
WHA, WAIT A SECOND, DEAR!
...WELL, EIICHI-ROU...
ALL RIGHT, SOUNDS FINE.
DAD...
YES, I AM ON THE CONTRARY, I THOUGHT HIS PROPOSAL MADE A FAIR BIT OF SENSE.
You're only thinking of your concerns
DEAR! ARE YOU REALLY THINKING ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?!
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME EIICHIROU HAS EVER ASKED US SERIOUSLY TO DO SOMETHING
Uuu
Ugh.
F-FINE.
Hahhh...
.....

R-REALLY?!
BUT JUST ONE YEAR, YOU HEAR ME?! IF YOU DON'T WIN THIS JUNIOR WHATEVER IT'S CALLED, THEN YOU WILL GIVE UP ON IT ONCE AND FOR ALL!
OKAY, I'VE GOT IT!
ALL RIGHT! NOW THAT EVERYTHING'S SETTLED, I'VE GOT TO REWORK MY SCHEDULE!
OH... WHAT'S THIS? YOU SURPRISINGLY GAVE HIM PERMISSION TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS
Q-QUIET, YOU LET ME JUST SAY THAT IT'S NOT BECAUSE I LOST TO THE ENTHUSIASM OF YOU BOTH
NOW INSTEAD OF UNREASONABLY FORCING HIM TO STUDY, HE'LL BE GIVING UP ALL ON HIS OWN THEN I THOUGHT HE'D BE ABLE TO FOCUS SOLELY ON HIS STUDIES THAT WAY THAT'S ALL
人生プラン
OH COME ON... WE'VE GOT TO CHEER HIM ON AT LEAST A LITTLE
AHH... I SUPPOSE IT WAS A MISTAKE TO MAKE HIM PLAY TENNIS
TWO DAYS LATER. STC.

October:	STC Cup Kanagawa Tournament
November:	All-Japan Junior Indoor Selectionals, Kantou Prelim
January:	All-Japan Junior Indoor
March:	Kanagawa Prefecture Tennis Tournament
July:	Kantou Junior Tennis Tournament
August:	All-Japan Junior Tennis Tournament

SO THIS IS THE IDEA YOU CAME TO ASK ME ABOUT: YOUR ROAD TO THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR.



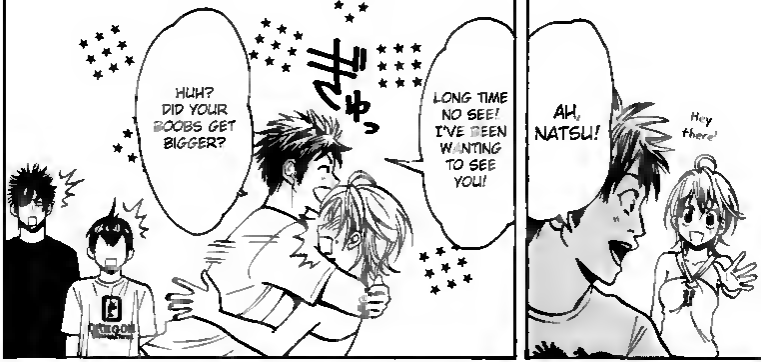


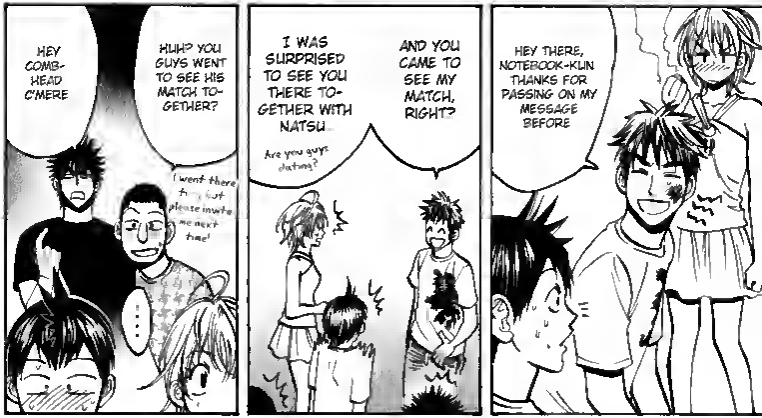
BUT, STC HAD ALREADY DECIDED TO COMPLETELY BACK YOU UP WITH THIS
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS?
OREGO International
IT'S EXCEPTIONAL FOR AN ATHLETE TO MAKE IT TO THE TOP 4 IN A PREFECTURAL TOURNAMENT,
YOUR DESIRE TO GO DOWN THE ROAD OF BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL UNTIL AUGUST WAS BROUGHT UP IN TODAY'S COACH MEETING.

WE EXPECT GOOD THINGS FROM YOU.
OREGON international
YES SIR!
FOR ONE WHOLE YEAR, I'M DEVOTING MY ENTIRE ATTENTION TO TENNIS!
WELCOME TO A COURT.
WOW THAT WAS REALLY FAST.
I WAS MOVED UP TO A COURT TOO!
NOW THAT IT'S COME THIS FAR, I'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO GO FOR IT!

COACH MIURA!
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME!
S-SOU-CHAN!
M-MAS-TER!
IT'S IKE SOUJI!

WHOA, IKE! I'VE BEEN WANTING TO MEET HIM!
I APOLOGIZE FOR MY LATE GREETINGS.
NO, NO, THANKS FOR COMING ALL THE WAY OVER HERE DESPITE YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE.
AH, IKE-KUN! CONGRATS ON YOUR FIRST WIN AT YOUR DEBUT!
YEAH. HE LOST HIS SECOND MATCH, BUT THE ROAD OF A PROFESSIONAL ISN'T EASY.
Whoa, it's Ike!
It's Ike-kun!
IKE, LONG TIME NO SEE!
MASTER, CONGRATS ON YOUR DEBUT!
KNOCK IT OFF WITH THE "MASTER" STUFF YUKICHI!
YOU'VE GOTTEN QUITE BIG HAVEN'T YOU?
WHOA IKE SOUJI REALLY IS PRETTY POPULAR.
わいわい
わいわい
WHEN I THINK OF THE AMAZING ADULT I SAW,
AND WHEN I SEE HE'S A NORMAL, EVERYDAY PERSON OF THE SAME AGE AS ME...
PAH!
IKE!
IT GIVES OFF A REALLY STRANGE ATMOSPHERE.


AH, NATSU!
Hey there!
LONG TIME NO SEE! I'VE BEEN WANTING TO SEE YOU!
HUH? DID YOUR BOOBS GET BIGGER?


HEY THERE, NOTEBOOK-KUN THANKS FOR PASSING ON MY MESSAGE BEFORE
AND YOU CAME TO SEE MY MATCH, RIGHT?
I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE YOU THERE TOGETHER WITH NATSU...
Are you guys dating?
HUH? YOU GUYS WENT TO SEE HIS MATCH TOGETHER?
I went there to... but please invite me next time!
HEY COMB-HEAD C'MERE

UH...WERE YOU GUYS GOING INCOGNITO?
NO, THAT WASN'T OUR INTENTION.
AHAHAH.
IKE, HOW LONG ARE YOU IN JAPAN FOR?
I'M HEADING HOME TONIGHT.

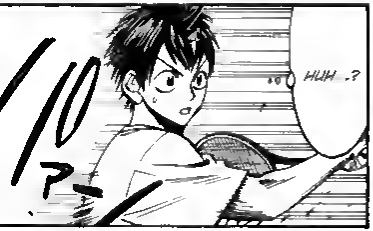
THIS... IS MY CHANCE TO HIT BALLS WITH A PROFESSIONAL!
ピク...!
I SEE. IN THAT CASE, SINCE YOU'RE FINALLY BACK, HOW ABOUT HITTING SOME BALLS WITH THE STC KIDS?
FINE BY ME, BUT...
OREGON
THESE PEOPLE ARE MY COACH, DOCTOR, AND MANAGER. BASICALLY, IF THEY DON'T AGREE TO IT, I CAN'T DO IT.
I'M GOOD TO GO IF IT'S SOME LIGHT HITTING.
Sure, just don't wear yourself out
Do you mind if I stay and hit some balls?
OKAY, I'LL GO GET MY RACKET FROM THE CAR.
THOSE WHO WANT TO HIT SOME BALLS WITH HIM, GET READY.
わぁぁ
TEN MINUTES PER PERSON, THEN SWITCH.
M-ME, TOO!
THAT WAS THE PLAN FROM THE START.
A Court has to do it
I'D LIKE TO GO UP AGAINST HIM!
OREGO

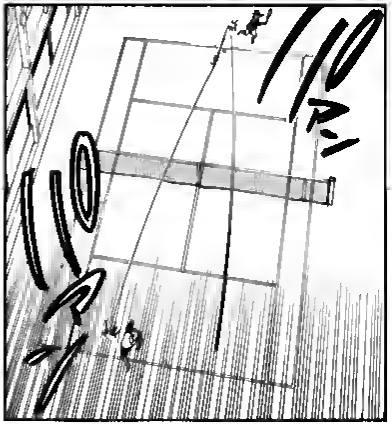
I'M IN YOUR CARE!
ドキ
HERE WE GO, NOTEBOOK-KUN!
ザワ
ザワ
ドキ

THERE HE GOES! NOT MAKING ANY UNNECESSARY MOVEMENTS, AND MOVING AROUND SO SMOOTHLY IT'S SICKENING!
NOW THAT I'M ACTUALLY RECEIVING HIS BALLS, THEY'RE A LOT HEAVIER THAN THEY'D FIRST SEEMED.
HOH!
パーン
HAH!
パーン

WHEN I WONDER WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WERE THIS A MATCH...SHIVERS RUN DOWN MY SPINE.
BUT I DON'T HAVE TO RUN FOR MY LIFE TO GET THEM BACK OVER THE NET THIS WAY EITHER.
JUST BY LOOKING, I KNOW THAT HE'S USING ABOUT FIFTY PERCENT OF HIS STRENGTH AND SENDING THEM TO EASY PLACES FOR ME TO HIT BACK.

EI-CHAN'S KEEPING UP, TOO, THOUGH.
HE REALLY IS AMAZING.


HUH .?



WH-WHAT...?

THE DOCTOR AND MANAGER AND WHOEVER AREN'T THERE NOW.

HOW ABOUT A MATCH?
うず
うず
HUH?!
A match?!
NO WAY... A MATCH WITH A PRO?!
COME ON, HOW ABOUT A QUICK ONE? DON'T WANT TO?
IT'S PART OF THEIR JOB, SO IF I GET INJURED, THEY'LL MAKE A BIG FUSS ABOUT IT.
SHHHH! I'VE GOT A MATCH NEXT WEEK TOO SO THE STAFF WILL STOP ME FROM HAVING A PRACTICE ONE

Shhh.
IF WE'RE GOING TO DO IT, NOW'S THE TIME, WHILE THE STAFF'S GONE.
LET'S DO IT BEFORE THEY COME BACK.
HUH...
HUH?!
LET'S HAVE A MATCH.

ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
NO IDEA.
WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?

THAT'S SOMETHING FOR ME TO WORRY ABOUT
DO YOU WANT TO PLAY OR NOT?
ゾッ
BUT... ARE YOU OKAY WITH THIS? THE DOCTOR SAID NO, DIDN'T HE?
#51: AN ASSET
OREGON

ALL RIGHT, THAT'S THE WAY TO GO!
I WANT TO PLAY!
I WON'T GET THIS CHANCE AGAIN!
ドキ
ドキ
SO I'M BETTING ON EVERYTHING FROM THIS PAST YEAR.
AND SEEING HOW MUCH OF IT I CAN PUT TO USE AGAINST A PERSON AT THE LEVEL I'M AIMING FOR, HUH?
I'LL MERELY STRIKE BACK AT HIM WITH ALL MY STRENGTH!

HAH!
KUH!
SO FAST! BUT HE'S GOT A REALLY LONG REACH AT HIS DISPOSAL!

HE SERVED SERIOUSLY THAT TIME.
WHOA, IT'S A MATCH NOW?!
TEN MINUTE MATCHES?!
ALL RIGHT! 15-LOVE!
GOOD REACTION WONDER IF HIS EYES ARE REALLY GOOD?
MASTER VS. ANIKI?!
I'M GETTING EXCITED!
OH MAN... SOU-CHAN ALWAYS TURNS IT INTO SOME KIND OF MATCH.
FROM WHAT I SAW AT THE MATCH, HE HAS A LOT OF VARIED HITS AT HIS DISPOSAL. IF HE OPTS FOR A DIFFERENT ONE EACH TIME AND LAUNCHES THEM AT ME, I'LL BE WAY IN OVER MY HEAD!
He'll finish me with just his serves!
NO. THAT'S NOT THE WHOLE OF IT...
TH-THAT WAS THE BALL OF A PROFESSIONAL...
OKAY, I'VE GOT IT...
I'LL JUST SEE HOW MANY POINTS I CAN GET OFF OF HIM...
I SHOULD CHANGE MY THOUGHT PROCESS AROUND A BIT.
TO BEGIN WITH, HE'S NOT SOMEONE COMPLETELY OUT OF MY LEAGUE.
NO. HOLD ON.

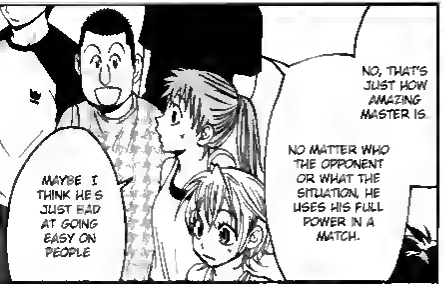
I'LL JUST TRY GETTING ONE POINT FOR NOW!
YEAH... WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT, THAT'S WHERE...
I'M TOTALLY GUESSING ON THIS!
IT'S ALL-OR-NOTHING!
HAH!

I GUESSED RIGHT!
HAH!
HUH, HE'S ALREADY ...?!
!!!
THAT WAS A GOOD RETURN, BUT YOU WERE SLOW ON THE UPTAKE!
OKAY, 30-LOVE!

HE'LL THROW IN A STROKE NEXT TIME!
NO... RETURNING HIS SERVE WAS THE FIRST STEP!
HE GOT A WINNER OFF THE RETURN I'D WORKED SO HARD TO HIT BACK...
More like you're too fast...
I WAS WAY OFF!
40-LOVE!
KUHN!
SO HEAVY!

THESE BALLS...IT'S NOT JUST A MATTER OF HOW HE HITS THE BALLS OR HOW HE USES HIS BODY...
HIS LEG AND ARM STRENGTH...NO, THE STRENGTH OF HIS ENTIRE BODY IS DIFFERENT.
ALTHOUGH HIS PHYSIQUE HASN'T CHANGED ALL THAT MUCH.

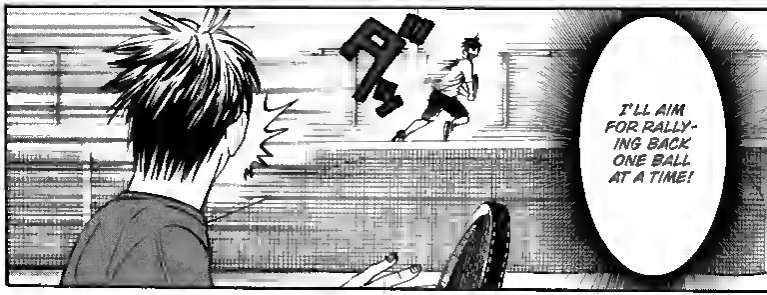
ISN'T IT THAT THE BODY'S MAKE-UP IN GENERAL IS DIFFERENT?!


NO, THAT'S JUST HOW AMAZING MASTER IS.
NO MATTER WHO THE OPPONENT OR WHAT THE SITUATION, HE USES HIS FULL POWER IN A MATCH.
MAYBE I THINK HE'S JUST BAD AT GOING EASY ON PEOPLE

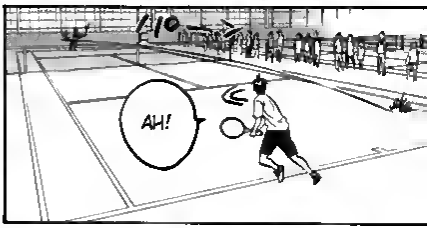
IKE'S SERIOUSLY GOING AT IT...
WOW, THAT'S PRETTY CRUEL
THE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR POWER IS WAY TOO BIG

KUH!
EVEN EI-CHAN, WHO'S GOOD AT COVERING THE COURT, CAN'T KEEP THE RALLY GOING
WHAT A FRIGHTENING LEVEL

IN THAT CASE!
EVEN IF I AIM TO HIT BACK EACH BALL ONE BY ONE,
I STILL CAN'T TAKE CONTROL OF THE MATCH DURING THE RALLY, MUCH LESS GET A POINT!


I'LL AIM FOR RALLY-ING BACK ONE BALL AT A TIME!

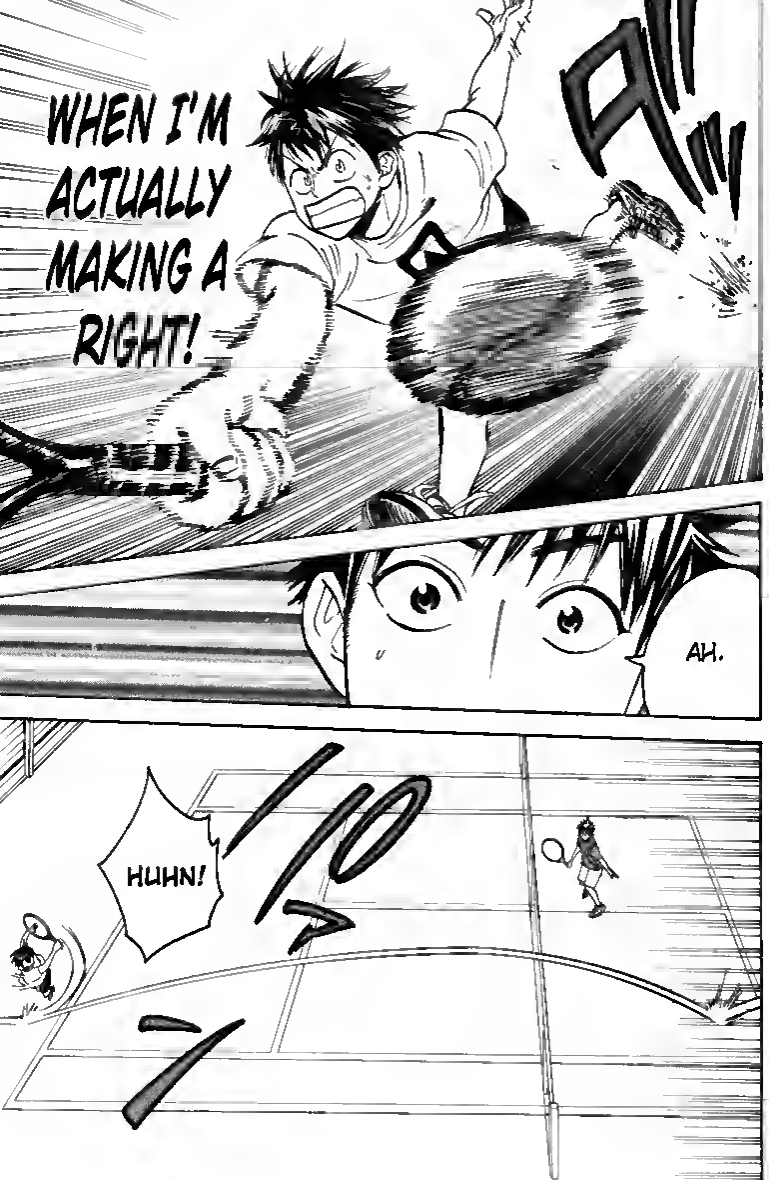
....


AH!

HE WAS TOTALLY 'SEEN THROUGH.
Fuuuh

...OKAY THEN!
...BUT, I'VE GOT TO REACT FASTER AND HIT HARDER THAN USUAL...
SO CALMLY, TOO...
EVEN THOUGH HE WAS CLEARLY LOOKING, IF I MOVE BEFORE HE HITS, HE'LL SCORE ON ME.
WELL, NO MATTER WHAT, I CAN'T DO WHAT I USUALLY DO...
KUH!
WHOA! IKE'S MOVING UP THE COURT!

I'LL...
MOVE LEFT HERE...!
AH, YOU'RE WIDE OPEN!
WE TOLD YOU, YOU'RE MOVING TOO FAR IN AD-VANCE!

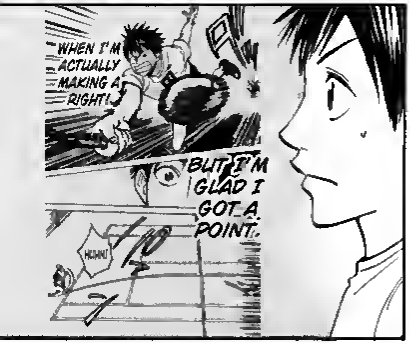

WHEN I'M ACTUALLY MAKING A RIGHT!
AH!!!
AH.
HUHN!

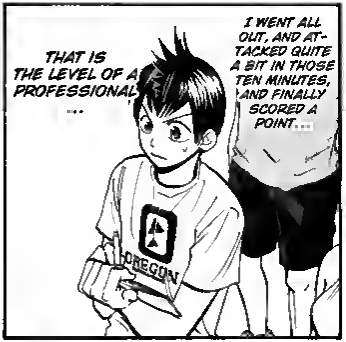
I-IT'S...ALMOST LIKE HE FORCED HIMSELF TO GET THAT POINT...
I...
I GOT IT...
カチ-ン
ガク
ガク
ガク
I'VE TOLD YOU, NO MATCHES! IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT THE MATCH, YOU HAVE A HABIT OF PUSHING YOURSELF.
Have a little more self-
Tch.
ビクッ
SOUJI! STOP RIGHT THERE!

OH... IT'S MARUO MARUO EI-ICHIROU
NOTEBOOK-KUN, WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
HUH?
WELL, WHATEVER. IT'S MORE OR LESS BEEN TEN MINUTES
AH, YEAH YOU'RE RIGHT... OKAY... u
AND NO NEED TO BE SO FORMAL. WE'RE THE SAME AGE AFTER ALL
MARUO-KUN, HUH
WELL, HE'S ALREADY WARMED UP NOW.
ALL RIGHT NEXT! I CAN'T PLAY YOU IN A MATCH BUT WHOEVER WANTS TO HIT SOME BALLS COME UP!

TAKUMA-SAN
THIS IS A BIT OF A PROB-LEM. WHEN I'M AGAINST YOU, I GET WORKED UP.
BEEN A WHILE.
YOU GUYS ARE HAVING A HARD TIME
IF YOU PRACTICE ANY HARDER THAN THIS, I'M STEPPING IN!
HAHAHA. HAD THAT BEEN A REAL MATCH, THERE'S NO WAY THAT WOULD'VE HAPPENED.
YOU WERE AMAZING, TOO THOUGH, ANIKI! YOU GOT A POINT OFF HIM.
NO... HE WAS AMAZ-ING.
GOOD WORK OUT THERE, EI-CHAN!

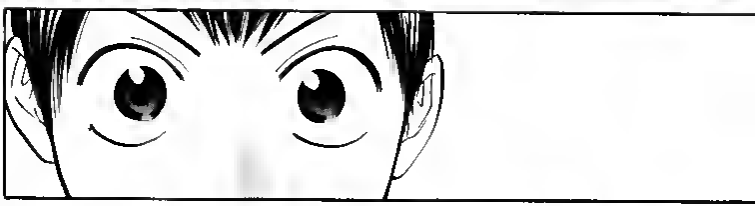
HAH!

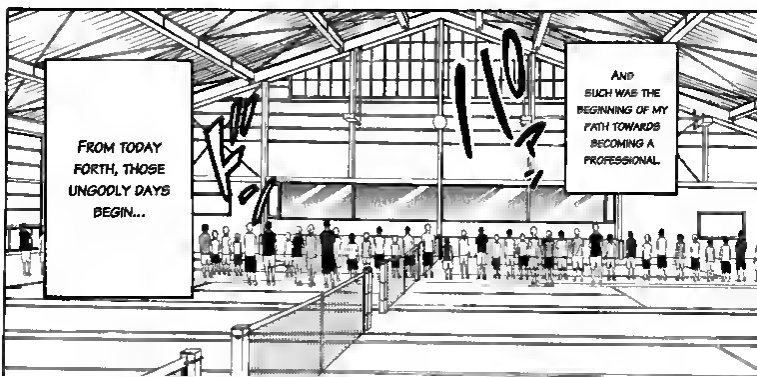

WHEN I'M ACTUALLY MAKING A RIGHT!
BUT I'M GLAD I GOT A POINT.
HUHH!


THAT IS THE LEVEL OF A PROFESSIONAL...
I WENT ALL OUT, AND ATTACKED QUITE A BIT IN THOSE TEN MINUTES, AND FINALLY SCORED A POINT...
OREGON

I WILL NEVER... FORGET HOW THIS FEELS.

FOR THE DAY WHEN I SOMEDAY PLAY AGAINST A PROFESSIONAL MYSELF!

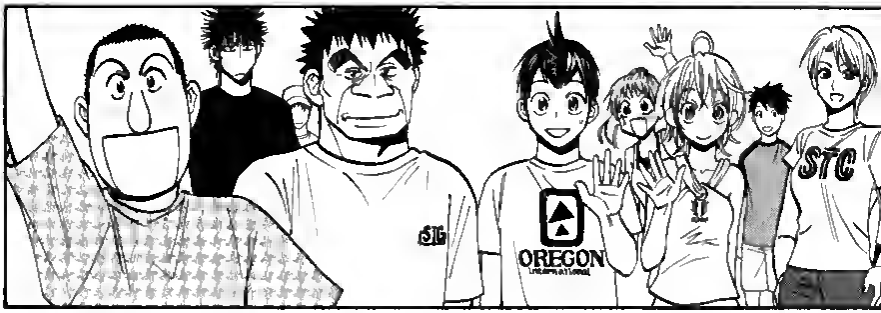



FROM TODAY FORTH, THOSE UNGODLY DAYS BEGIN...
AND SUCH WAS THE BEGINNING OF MY PATH TOWARDS BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL.

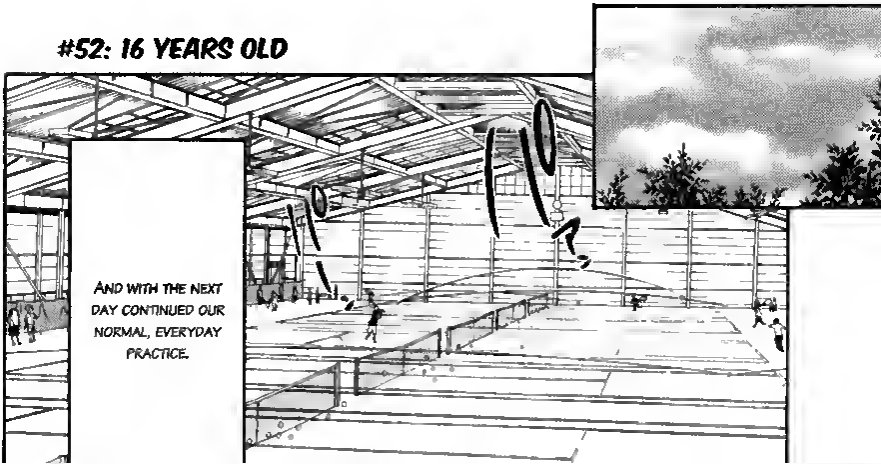
WHO'S NEXT, THEN?
Baby Steps
ベイビーステップ

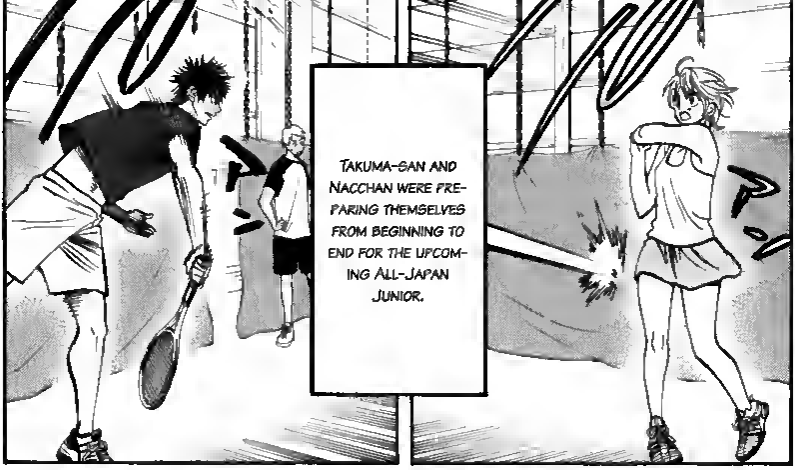
DOESN'T THIS GUY EVER GET TIRED ...?
Is he some kind of monster?
Did it twice
OREGON

Nice punch!
OKAY, TAKE CARE, NATSUI.
Huh...? It's already time to go? All right.
Okay, Souji. Let's get going.



#52: 16 YEARS OLD

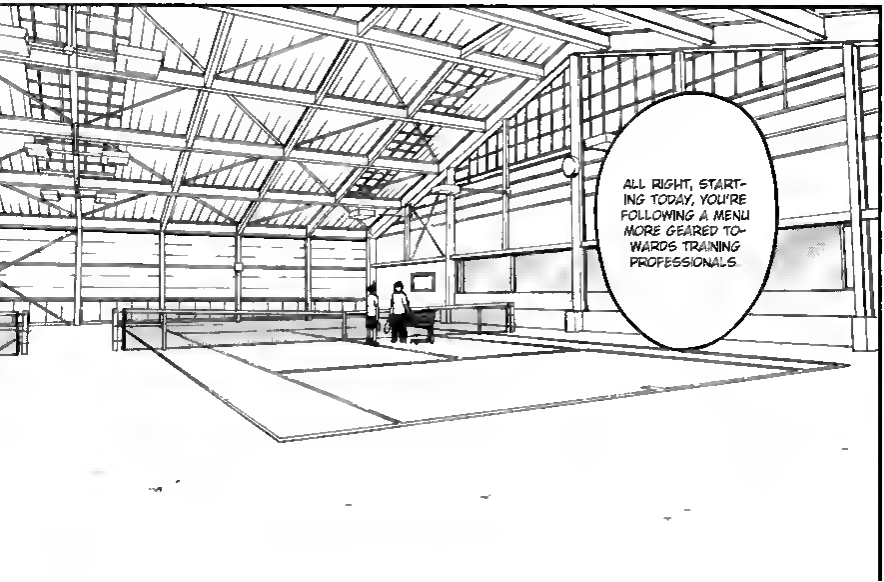




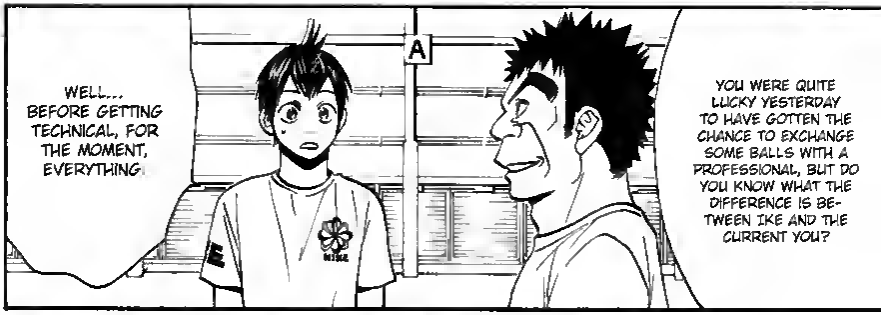
Or rather, as I declared I was shooting for pro, from here on out, I'll be doing a special kind of practice now.

October:	STC Cup Kanagawa Tournament
November:	All-Japan Junior Indoor Selectionals, Kantou Preliminaries
January:	All-Japan Junior Indoor
March:	Kanagawa Prefecture Tennis Tournament
July:	Kantou Junior Tennis Tournament
August:	All-Japan Junior Tennis Tournament

As for me, I was following a different regime as my next tournament wasn't for two more months.



I WAS MORE THAN PREPARED FOR A STRICTER PRACTICE.


A
WELL... BEFORE GETTING TECHNICAL, FOR THE MOMENT, EVERYTHING
YOU WERE QUITE LUCKY YESTERDAY TO HAVE GOTTEN THE CHANCE TO EXCHANGE SOME BALLS WITH A PROFESSIONAL, BUT DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE DIFFERENCE IS BETWEEN IKE AND THE CURRENT YOU?

AT THIS TIME, YOU SHOULD START WITH THE AREA WHERE RESULTS ARE EASIEST TO ACHIEVE.
TO SUM EVERYTHING UP, STARTING TODAY, YOU WILL HAVE TO EFFICIENTLY STRENGTHEN YOUR MIND, SKILLS, AND YOUR BODY AS A WHOLE.
IN THAT CASE, YOUR STARTING POINT WILL OBVIOUSLY BE...

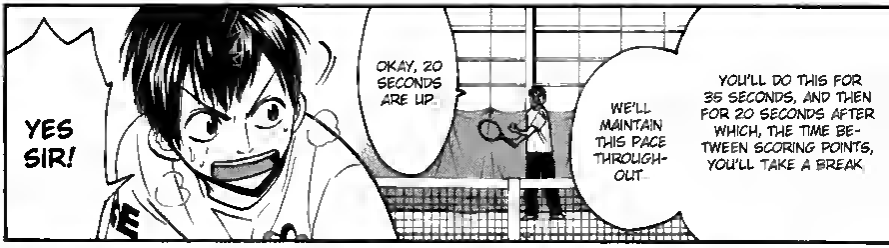
I WAS AT THE POINT WHERE I THOUGHT THAT OUR BODY MAKE-UP WAS FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT.
I GET WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

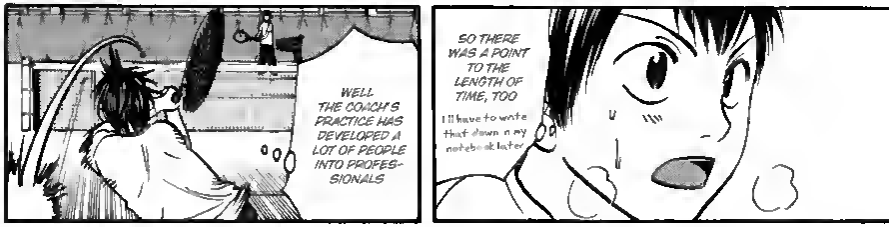
IMPROVING THE BODY'S ABILITY WILL BE OUR FOREMOST PRIORITY, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, WE WILL BE FURTHER STRENGTHENING YOU MIND AND TECHNIQUE... ARE YOU GETTING THIS?
YES SIR.
YOU MAY THINK YOU'RE PREPARED, BUT YOU WILL BE UNDERGOING SOME VERY INTENSE TRAINING.
THE REASON WE PLANNED FOR YOU TO NOT PARTICIPATE IN TOURNAMENTS OVER THE NEXT COUPLE MONTHS WAS OUT OF CONSIDERATION FOR YOUR STAMINA.
?
I HAVE FAITH YOU'LL GET THROUGH THIS.
I-IT'S GOING TO BE THAT TOUGH ..?
ゴク
TRANS-FORMING THE BODY!
NIKE

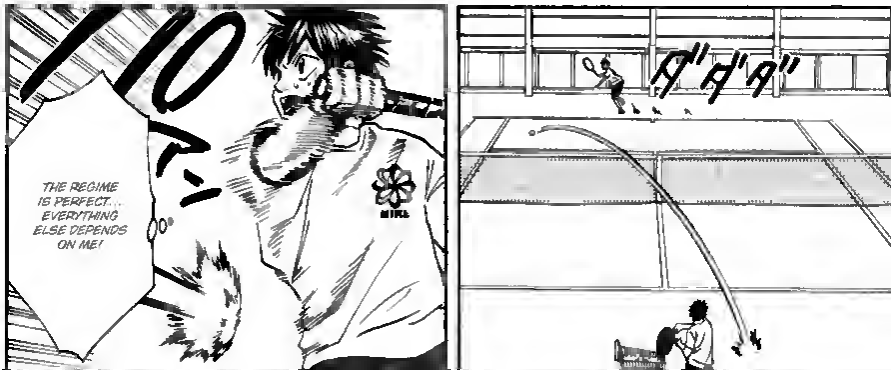
ALL RIGHT, WE'LL ALTERNATE BETWEEN YOUR FOREHAND AND YOUR BACKHAND. TRY TO SCORE WITH EACH BALL.
YES SIR!
THERE
HAH!
MIKI

I CAN BARELY COVER THE DISTANCE WITH ALL MY STRENGTH! THIS IS ROUGH!
KUH!
アーン
WHAT'S WITH THE CORNERS?!
ダッ
HAH!
ダダダ
TAH!
ダダダ
バァン
ARE PILING HIGHER AND HIGHER!
ドッ
EVEN FOR ME, ALL THE THINGS I DESIRE,
NI

ALL OF THAT LASTED A TOTAL OF 35 SECONDS. THAT'S THE MAXIMUM A PERSON CAN TAKE WHEN DOING AN AEROBIC EXERCISE.
HARD, ISN'T IT?
Even pros have it rough.
BWAAH
ALL RIGHT. 20 SECOND BREAK.


YES SIR!
OKAY, 20 SECONDS ARE UP.
WE'LL MAINTAIN THIS PACE THROUGHOUT.
YOU'LL DO THIS FOR 35 SECONDS, AND THEN FOR 20 SECONDS AFTER WHICH, THE TIME BETWEEN SCORING POINTS, YOU'LL TAKE A BREAK.

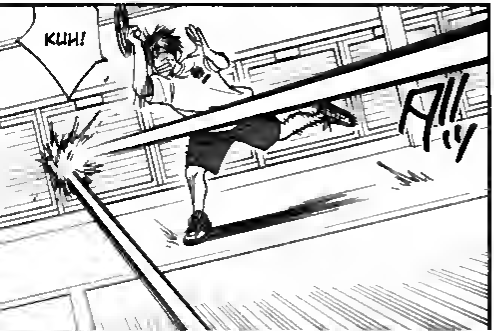

WELL, THE COACH'S PRACTICE HAS DEVELOPED A LOT OF PEOPLE INTO PROFESSIONALS
SO THERE WAS A POINT TO THE LENGTH OF TIME, TOO
I'll have to write that down in my notebook later

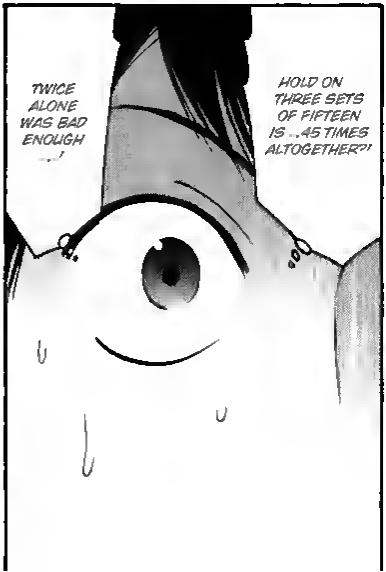

THE REGIME IS PERFECT... EVERYTHING ELSE DEPENDS ON ME!
NIKE
ダダダ

ALL RIGHT, 20 SECOND BREAK.
THAT WAS THE SECOND TIME AROUND. WE'LL DO THIS FOR FIFTEEN TIMES TOTAL.
THIS IS ROUGHLY THE EQUIVALENT TO THE NUMBER OF POINTS IN TWO GAMES.

AFTER THAT, WE'LL HAVE A 90 SECOND BREAK. THAT'S THE BREAK TIME ALLOTTED FOR A CHANGING COURT.
!?
FIRST, WE'LL DO THREE SETS OF THIS.
IN OTHER WORDS, WE'RE GOING TO TRY FOR THE APPROXIMATE TIME OF AROUND 6 GAMES.

20 SECONDS ARE UP LET'S GO!


KUH!


HOLD ON THREE SETS OF FIFTEEN IS ..45 TIMES ALTOGETHER?!
TWICE ALONE WAS BAD ENOUGH ...!

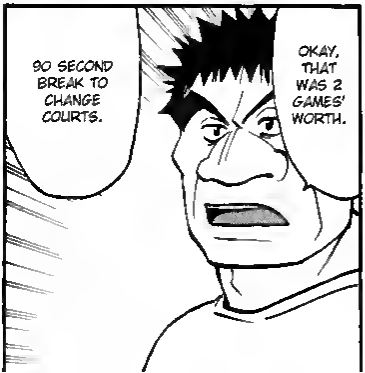
I...CAN'T RECOVER... IN JUST 20 SECONDS...
TIME FOR YOUR 20 SECOND BREAK.
OKAY, 35 SECONDS START NOW!
HAH!

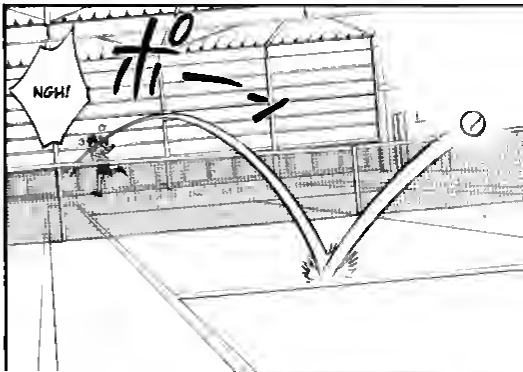
20 SECONDS
THIS IS REALLY HARD.
35 SECONDS
20 SECONDS.
HUH!
35 SECONDS

I KNOW FULL WELL THAT IT'S HARD!
HEY, NO SLACKING OFF! THERE'S NO POINT TO THIS PRACTICE IF YOU DON'T GO ALL OUT!
FUGUH!

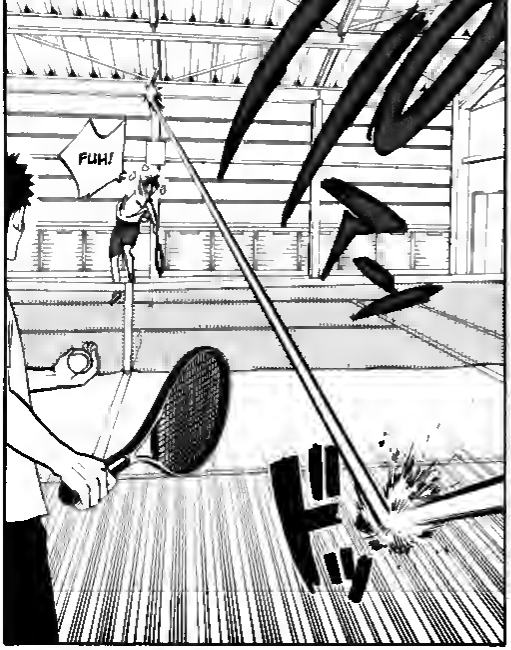
ALTHOUGH THE BONES IN YOUR LEGS WON'T BREAK FROM THE ACUTE STOPPING AND DASHING, MANY LITTLE CRACKS ARE DEVELOPING THROUGHOUT.
ドーン
ALL THE CELLS IN YOUR BODY ARE CRYING FOR OXYGEN, AND YOUR HEART AND LUNGS ARE PUSHING THEMSELVES TO THEIR LIMITS.
WHILE YOUR MUSCLES AREN'T TEARING ANY, THEY'RE STARTING TO INFLAME.
FATIGUE IS QUICKLY SPREADING THROUGHOUT EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM.
NIKE
THIS IS WHAT I MEAN BY TRANSFORMING THE BODY.
YOUR BODY RIGHT NOW IS COMPLETELY STOCK FULL WITH ABNORMALITIES.
BUT IF YOU CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THIS "ABNORMALITY" OVER THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, YOU WILL BECOME AWARE OF YOUR OWN BODY. FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME HERE, YOU'VE BEGUN CHANGING YOUR BODY IN ORDER TO PROTECT BOTH YOUR BONES AND MUSCLE.

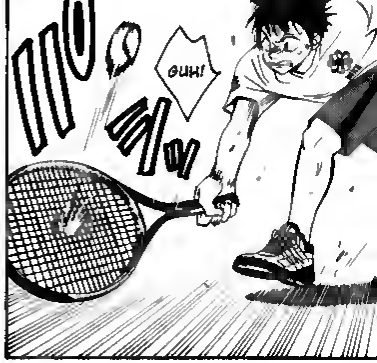
YOU ARE COMPLETELY BREAKING DOWN YOUR BODY ONCE,
TO SPECIALIZE EXCLUSIVELY FOR PLAYING TENNIS.

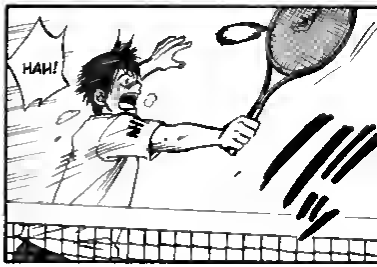

90 SECOND BREAK TO CHANGE COURTS.
OKAY, THAT WAS 2 GAMES' WORTH.

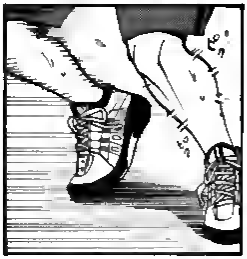

NGH!

TH-THIRTY MORE TIMES OF THIS?!
ドッ
ALL RIGHT, 90 SECONDS ARE UP
NOW WE'LL WORK ON DOING THE FOREHAND, BACKHAND, VOLLEY, VOLLEY, AND SMASH ROUTINE.
...
HAH!


FUH!

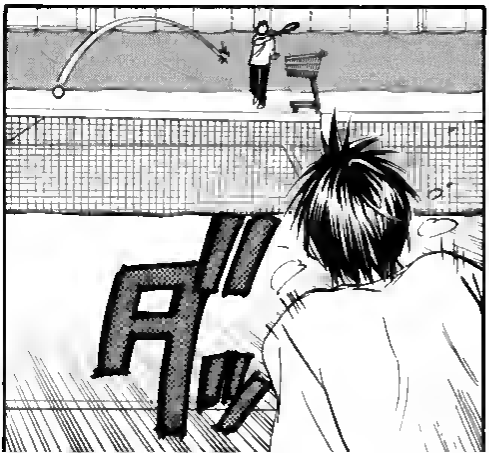

GUH!


HAH!



NIKE

ALL RIGHT, GO BACK



HEY, WHAT'S WRONG? WE'VE STILL GOT A LONG WAY TO GO.
I-I'M SORRY...MY BODY...ISN'T LISTENING TO ME...
GUH.
WELL, TELL YOUR BODY THIS:
C-COULD WE PLEASE...LET UP ON THE PACE...A LITTLE?
"I LIVE FOR TENNIS."

YOU'RE ALREADY 16 YEARS OLD
TO START OFF WITH, THIS IS THE LAST SHOT YOU HAVE AT BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL.
WERE YOU A CHILD, YOU COULD HAVE FUN AND SLOWLY WORK YOUR WAY UP TO MORE CHALLENGING TASKS.
BUT IN REALITY, FOR YOU TO BECOME A PRO, THIS PRACTICE IS MINIMAL AT BEST
IF WE CHANGE THE PRACTICE ROUTINE, YOU'LL EVENTUALLY WANT TO GIVE UP.
ビビッ
IS THAT OKAY WITH YOU?

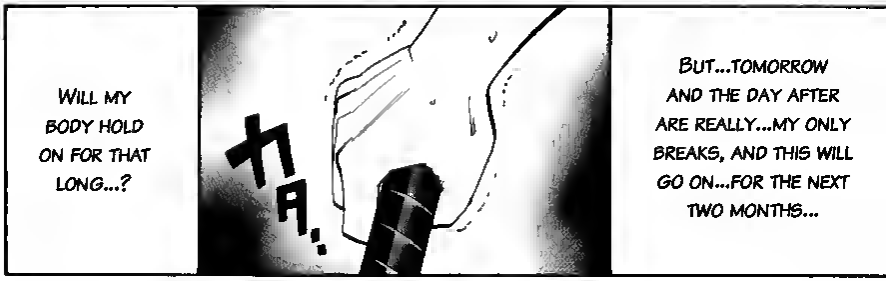
OH...HEY, NACCHAN...
WHA... EI-CHAN, ARE YOU OKAY?!

BLEGH!
adidas
3

SORRY... 30 MORE SECONDS.. UNTIL I... HAVE TO GET BACK..
WH-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
EI-CHAN?!

WISH...I'D ST.RTED... TENNIS JUST A LITTLE BIT... EARLIER.
I-I...

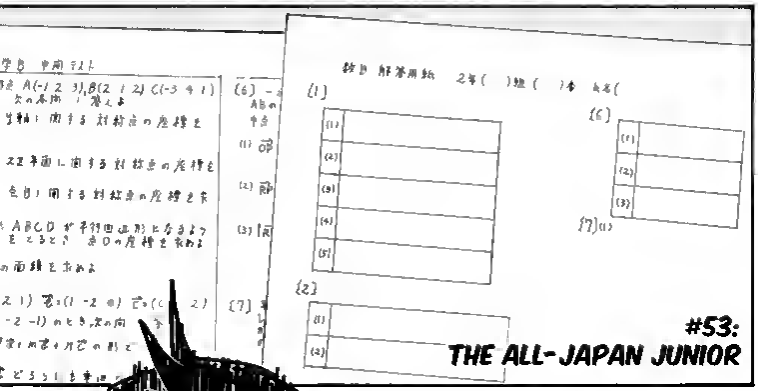
I WAS SUP-
POSED TO HAVE
BEEN PREPARED
FOR THIS...


WILL MY
BODY HOLD
ON FOR THAT
LONG...?
ハァ、
BUT...TOMORROW
AND THE DAY AFTER
ARE REALLY...MY ONLY
BREAKS, AND THIS WILL
GO ON...FOR THE NEXT
TWO MONTHS...

PLEASE
HANG IN
THERE,
BODY...

IF I KEEP THIS UP, I'LL END UP LOOKING LIKE ARAYA-KUN...
I'M READY FOR THE NEXT ONE! COME ON!

Baby Steps



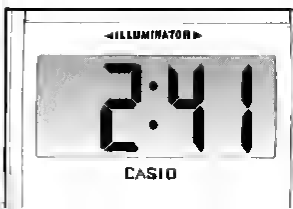
#53: THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR

あぁ
あぁ
あぁ
I NEED MORE TIIIIIIIME!
チッ

I THOUGHT I'D FINALLY MANAGE TO GET SLEEP ...
JUST A FEW MINUTES BEFORE THREE ...
NO

ハァ ハァ
ハァ

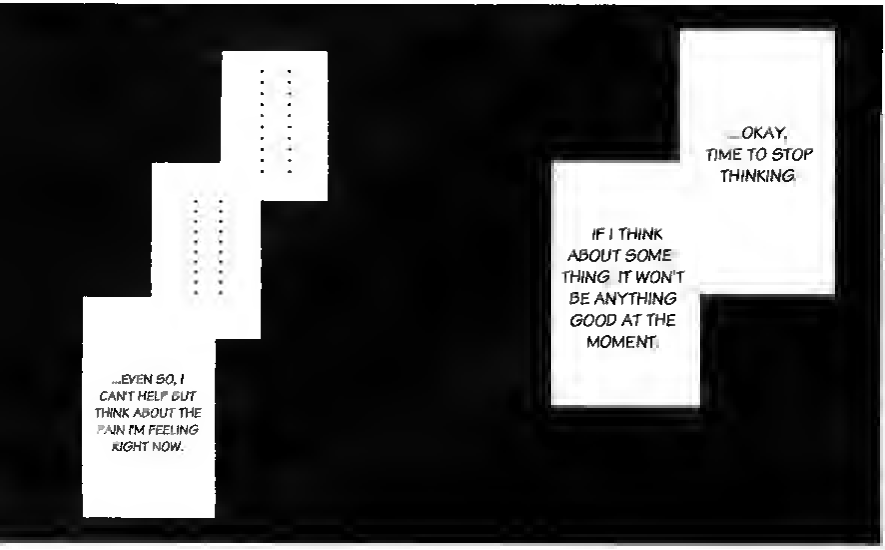
O-OW. OW. OW


ILLUMINATOR
2:41
CASIO

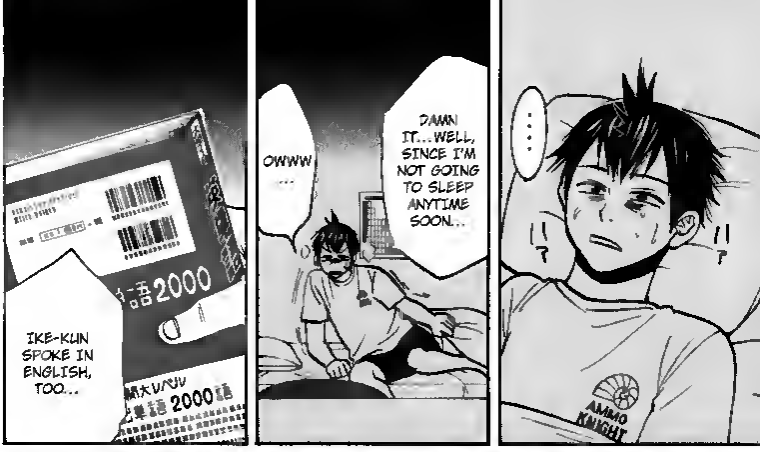
SO PRACTICE HAS TAKEN ITS TOLL ON ME...
MY BODY HURTS ALL OVER, AND I'M STRANGELY BURNING UP...
...
IT'S BEEN A WEEK SINCE I STARTED THE I'RO DEVELOP-MENT REGIME.
BUT...WHY AM I NOT SLEEPY AT ALL?
EXHAUSTING MYSELF BEYOND MY LIMITS IS KEEPING ME FROM SLEEPING FOR THE MOMENT
I GUESS THAT MEANS MY BODY ITSELF ISN'T EXACTLY AT THE LEVEL TO GO I'RO YET
NO.. I'VE ONLY JUST STARTED...AS IF I COULD GO BACK NOW AFTER ALL THAT BIG TALK!

BUT...
IF ALL THIS WORK STILL ISN'T ENOUGH...
...NO! I'M HAVING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS BECAUSE I'M TIRED...
I'D ALREADY DECIDED TO PUT OFF STUDYING UNTIL LATER TOO
AND TO THINK THAT I HAD A DREAM ABOUT TAKING A TEST

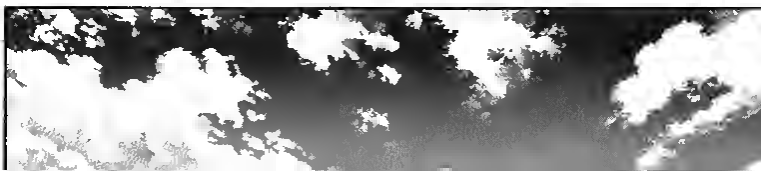
HONESTLY, SINCE I STARTED THIS BODY TRANSFORMATION THING, EVEN WHEN I DO GET HOME, I CAN'T GET ANY STUDYING DONE.
MORE THAN LIKELY, THE CHANGE IN MY LIVING HABITS IS AFFECTING MY BODY BALANCE ...

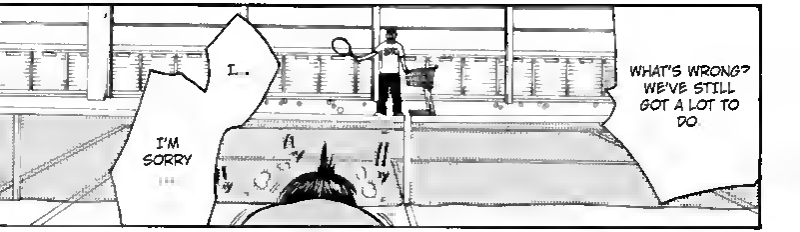

...OKAY, TIME TO STOP THINKING.
IF I THINK ABOUT SOMETHING IT WON'T BE ANYTHING GOOD AT THE MOMENT.
...EVEN SO, I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK ABOUT THE PAIN I'M FEELING RIGHT NOW.

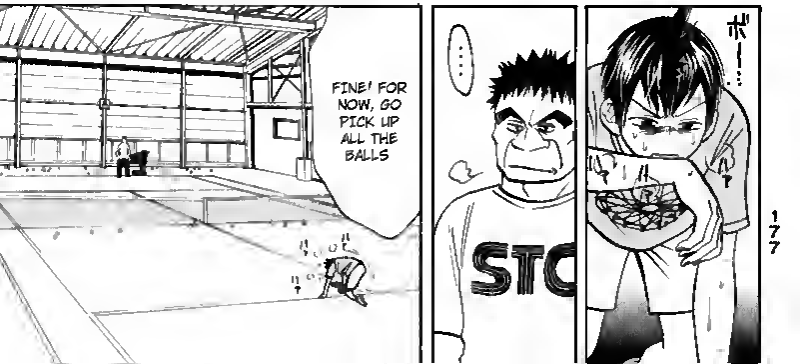
I CAN'T TALK ABOUT THIS WITH ANYONE, EITHER.
WELL...EVEN IF I DID, IT WOULDN'T SOLVE ANYTHING.


IKE-KUN SPOKE IN ENGLISH, TOO..
OWWW ...
DAMN IT...WELL, SINCE I'M NOT GOING TO SLEEP ANYTIME SOON..
....
ハァ
ハァ
AMAKO KNIGHT

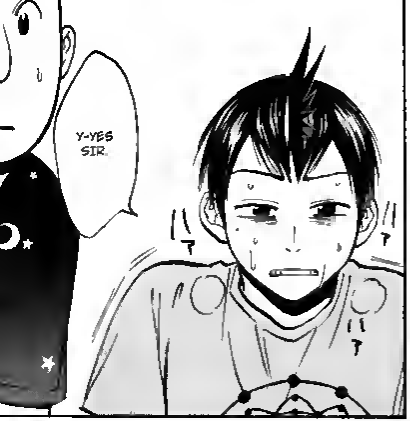
prevail
圧倒する
defeat
負かす
leap
跳ぶ
overcome
打ち勝つ
nod
うなずく
I RECITED MY ENGLISH VOCABULARY
AS IF I WERE COUNTING SHEEP ON A SLEEPLESS NIGHT

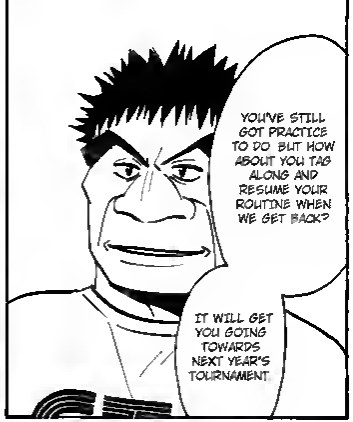



I..
I'M SORRY...
WHAT'S WRONG? WE'VE STILL GOT A LOT TO DO


FINE! FOR NOW, GO PICK UP ALL THE BALLS
...
ボー...

EVERYONE'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU NOW THAT COACH IS SUDDENLY GOING SO HARD ON YOU.
OH...BUT... I ASKED HIM TO.
ARE YOU OKAY, ANIKI?
Y-YEAH... THANKS.
BY THE WAY, MARUO-KUN...
STC
ANIKI
AND BESIDES, THIS MUCH ISN'T EVEN ENOUGH
AH!
THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR!
WHAT, DID YOU FORGET? THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR STARTS TOMORROW.
I'VE GOT TO HEAD TO OSAKA TOMORROW ALONG WITH TAKUMA AND NATSU.
HUH...? WHAT FOR?
STC

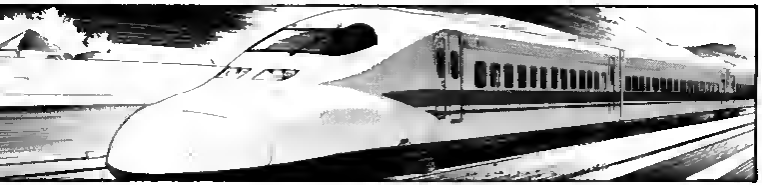



YOU'VE STILL GOT PRACTICE TO DO BUT HOW ABOUT YOU TAG ALONG AND RESUME YOUR ROUTINE WHEN WE GET BACK?
IT WILL GET YOU GOING TOWARDS NEXT YEAR'S TOURNAMENT.

IF I GO NOW, I FEEL LIKE I'LL GET REALLY DEMORALIZED...

MY LEGS FEEL SO HEAVY...

EVEN THOUGH I SHOULD BE EXCITED ABOUT DROPPING EVERYTHING AND GOING TO WATCH THE TOURNAMENT ...



横長 公太郎 (九州 柳瀬高)
浜口 安隆 (北海道 札幌琴藻高)
3 前田 忠 (関西 関西学園高)
14 西村 良哉 (東北 盛岡六高)
15 平泉 守 (四国 高松中央高
16 磯野 真治 (北信越 TTA
EVEN JAPAN HAS SOME OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED TENNIS COURTS WHERE INTERNATIONAL MATCHES TAKE PLACE.
THIS IS THE SITE FOR THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR TENNIS TOURNAMENT.
WHAT IS IT? IMAGINING WHAT NEXT YEAR WILL BE LIKE?
WHOA...
ACTUALLY, JUST THINKING THAT EVERYONE HERE LOOKS REALLY GOOD
THE TOP RANKED JUNIORS FROM EVERY SINGLE PREFECTURE ARE HERE TO SEE WHO'S THE BEST OF THEM ALL.

THERE ARE FOUR PLAYERS FROM KANAGAWA PARTICIPATING IN THE TOURNAMENT. MIYAGAWA, OOBAYASHI, ARAYA AND TAKUMA
KANAGAWA IS THE HIGHEST RANKED PREFECTURE IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY
MIYAGAWA-KUN AND OOBAYASHI-KUN AREN'T SEEDED?!
ARAYA-KUN'S SEEDED 16TH?!

シード順位
1 高橋 孝介 九州
2 難波江 優 関東
3 住吉 梓 関西
4 江川 逞 関東
5 神田 久志 九州
OH WOW! NO SURPRISE THAT TAKUMA-SAN'S SEEDED 4TH!
BUT THERE ARE STILL THREE PEOPLE ABOVE HIM!

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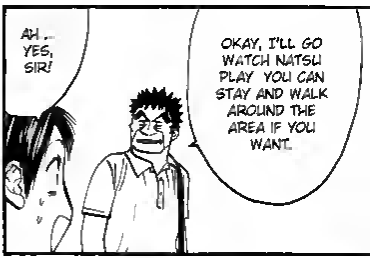
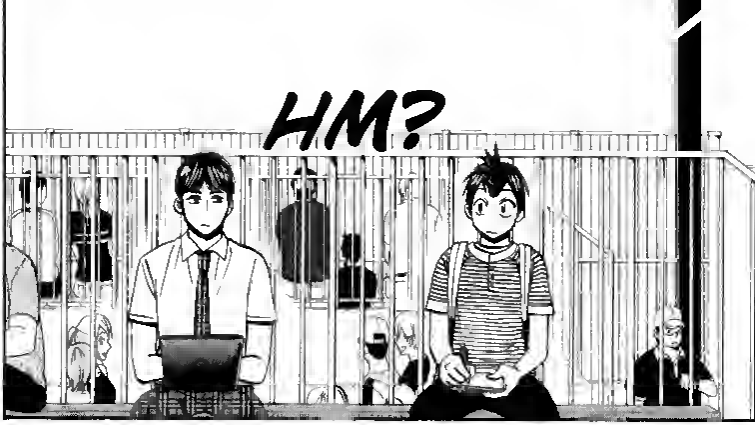

OKAY, I'LL GO WATCH NATSU PLAY. YOU CAN STAY AND WALK AROUND THE AREA IF YOU WANT.
AH... YES, SIR!

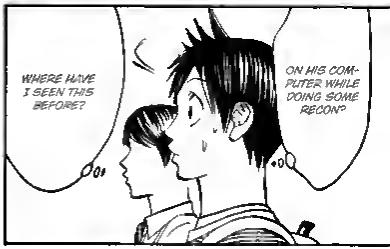
AH...ON COURT 6, I BET THAT'S...
ハァハァ

9
LOOKING AROUND I CAN SEE THAT THEY'RE PROBABLY ALL SEEDED PLAYERS
I wonder if Takuma-san around here, too?

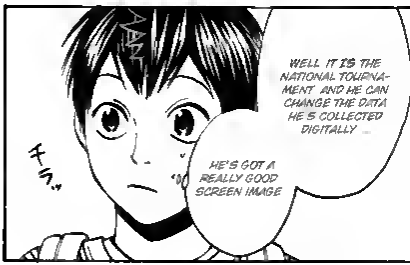
HAH!
THE KYUUSHUU REPRESENTATIVE, KANDA HISASHI, SEEDED 5TH.
WHAT A STABLE AND POWERFUL SPIN.
HE LOOKS SHORTER THAN ME, TOO
A RISING SHOT THAT PUTS HIS SWIFTNESS TO GOOD USE. HE'S GOT SOME LEGS ON HIM!
カタ カタ カタ カキ カキ
ドッ
IF HE'S AT TAKUMA'S LEVEL, I SHOULD TAKE NOTES.
カタ カタ カタ カキ カキ


HM?

A NOTE-BOOK? SOUNDS LIKE ME
ハァン


WHERE HAVE I SEEN THIS BEFORE?
ON HIS COMPUTER WHILE DOING SOME RECON?

チラ
THE EASIER THE COLLECTION THE BETTER, SO WRITING IT ALL DOWN BY HAND IS A PRETTY GOOD IDEA


WELL IT IS THE NATIONAL TOURNAMENT AND HE CAN CHANGE THE DATA HE'S COLLECTED DIGITALLY ...
HE'S GOT A REALLY GOOD SCREEN IMAGE
チラ…

ミ
?

TAKUMA-SAN!
HEY.
BAHAHAHA.
GYAAH!
AHHH. MUSCLE PAIN, MUSCLE PAIN!
WE'RE IN THE SAME CLUB.
He's not playing in any matches, but still, here for some reason.
Hardly
You guys must be good friends!
HE'S A FUNNY GUY, SAYING "GYAAA" LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A MANGA.
AH...
HELLO, EGAWA-KUN.
HUH...? DO YOU KNOW HIM, TAKUMA-SAN?
HUH...? NO JUST NOW, WE...
ANYWAY, HOW'D YOU GUYS GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER?

I'M MIYAMOTO FROM TENNIS TIMES COULD YOU SPARE ME SOME OF YOUR TIME?
HEY, LOOK, ALL THE CAST IS LINED UP
YEAH, RIGHT HE'S..

H-HE'S A FIRST YEAR?!
HE'S A YEAR YOUNGER THAN ME!

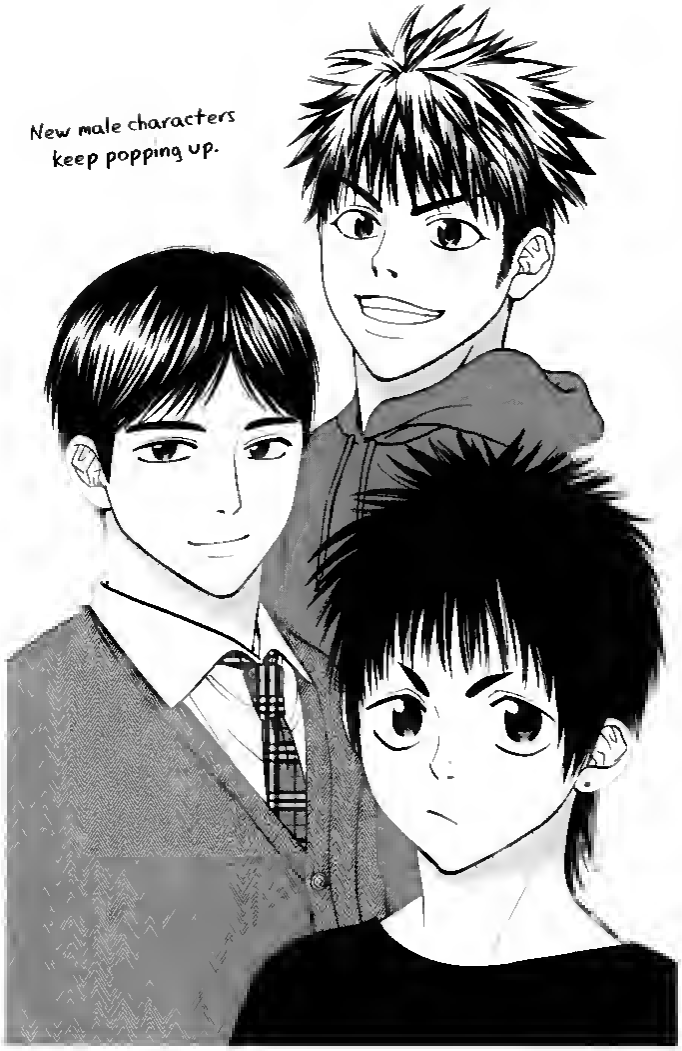
IT'S A REPORTER FROM A TENNIS MAGAZINE
YOU'RE ALL HERE TO WATCH KANDA-KUN, RIGHT?
MAKES SENSE. HE'S A FIRST YEAR, AND IS NUMBER TWO FROM THE ILLUSTRIOUS YANASE HIGH SCHOOL. HE'S QUITE THE SPECIAL GUY AMONG THIS YEAR'S ROOKIES.
HE MADE TOP 4 RECENTLY IN THE HIGH SCHOOL INTER-HIGH. HIS GROUP IS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND HIS VICTORIES

I'D LIKE TO INTERVIEW YOU ALL ONE BY ONE LATER DO YOU MIND?

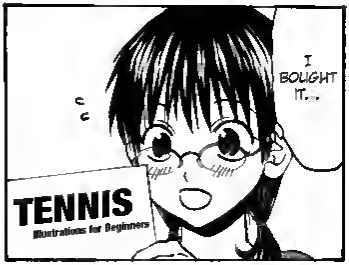
SUMIYOSHI-KUN IS ORIGINALLY FROM HERE IN OSAKA AND I'D LIKE TO ASK HIM HOW HE INTENDS TO PREPARE HIMSELF AS A 3RD SEED IN THE TOURNAMENT.
AS FOR EGAWA-KUN HE RECENTLY STARTED PLAYING TENNIS AGAIN, AND I'D LIKE TO ASK HIM A FEW QUESTIONS AS TO WHY, IF THERE IS A REASON.
THIS GUY IS THE 3RD SEED SUMIYOSHI AZUSA.
AND THE SECOND-YEAR HERE IS THE LEAD CONTENDER FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP THIS YEAR.
I'D LIKE A WORD WITH THIS YOUNG MAN, NARAE YUU-KUN, ABOUT HIS PLANS FOR THIS TOURNAMENT.
THE LEAD CONTENDER, YOU KNOW THAT I'M A 2ND SEED, RIGHT?
HE'S THE SAME YEAR AS ME AND BETTER THAN TAKUMA-SAN!
HE'S THE BEST BET FOR WINNING THE CHAMPIONSHIP, AND HE'S A 2ND SEED?!
AND THEN THERE'S...

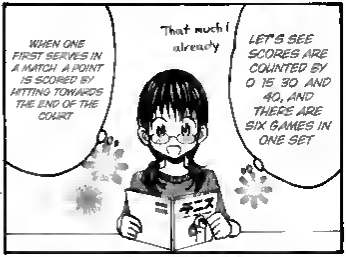
IT WOULD'VE BEEN NICE IF THE 1ST SEED TAKAHASHI-KUN WERE HERE ...
スルー
THEN, I'LL SEE ALL OF YOU LATER
Don't worry about it!
I'm not not really
COME TO THINK OF IT,
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
UH...
WHAT KIND OF TENNIS DOES HE PLAY?
I'M...MARUO EIICHIROU.
THIS GUY IS THAT GOOD?
NICE TO MEET YOU.
CONTINUED IN VOLUME 7.

Baby Steps

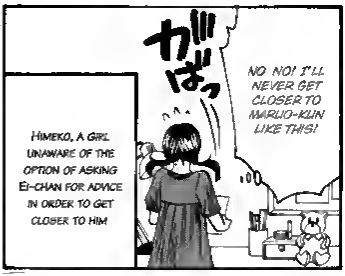

New male characters
keep popping up.

THE FIRST BARRIER IN HIMEKO'S CASE




WHEN ONE FIRST SERVES IN A MATCH A POINT IS SCORED BY HITTING TOWARDS THE END OF THE COURT
That much I already
LET'S SEE SCORES ARE COUNTED BY 0 15 30 AND 40, AND THERE ARE SIX GAMES IN ONE SET
テニス

THERE ARE SERVES IN EVERY GAME IT ENDS ON THE ODD NUMBERED GAME FOR EACH SET
A SERVE IS THE VERY FIRST BALL SHOT GOING FIRST FROM THE RIGHT SIDE ACROSS THE COURT TOWARDS THE LEFT
MMM
テニス


HIMEKO, A GIRL UNAWARE OF THE OPTION OF ASKING EI-CHAN FOR ADVICE IN ORDER TO GET CLOSER TO HIM
NO NO! I'LL NEVER GET CLOSER TO MARUO-KUN LIKE THIS!

HELLO KACHIKI HERE

VOLUME 4 TOOK A COMPLETE SPIN AWAY FROM VOLUME 5 MOST OF IT DIDN'T HAVE ALL THAT MANY MATCHES TAKE PLACE HOW WAS THAT FOR EVERY-ONE? IT WAS DECIDED THAT SINCE THERE WAS A STRING OF MATCHES BEFORE IT D WE GOOD MATERIAL FOR MOVING ON TO WHERE WE ARE NOW I'M GLAD I WAS ABLE TO DRAW AS MUCH INDEED I AM

OH, AND ALSO THERE WAS A POSTCARD ATTACHED TO THE FIRST EDITION OF THIS VOLUME IT'S A CENTERFOLD COLOR PICTURE COMMEMORATING THE FIRST ANNI VERSARY OF BABY STEPS. YES, IT REALLY HAS BEEN A YEAR

THANKS TO EVERYONE OUT THERE BABY STEPS HAS BEEN ABLE TO MAKE IT THIS FAR! THANK YOU SO MUCH! I HOPE YOU'LL CONTINUE READING!

HOPE TO SEE YOU IN THE NEXT VOLUME!

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

POST CARD

キリトリ線

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Baby Steps
ベイビーステップ